

Mainstreaming Equality at the Scottish Executive: the discursive construction of policy

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the central paradox of gender and equality mainstreaming: namely that the remarkable diffusion of the strategy and its widespread adoption has been in stark contrast to the lack of evidence for any significant change in either governmental practice or concrete outputs. Despite high levels of political will mainstreaming appears to elude implementation.

The opportunities afforded by constitutional change in the UK to embed new norms and values in institutional design have been well exploited. Feminists have organised to ensure that the principle of equal opportunity was inextricably linked to the enhancement of democracy, and that a new Parliament would have a more equal balance of female and male representatives. Suggestions that Scotland provides a positive environment for the development of mainstreaming, however, have neglected the importance of the Civil Service as a force of continuity. This thesis addresses this gap.

A key aim of the thesis is to provide insight into the possibilities of inserting gender into an organisation designed with man in mind by exploring what it means to ask bureaucrats to work within a new frame. It locates this question in a study of the day-to-day interaction of policy makers directly involved in mainstreaming.

The importance of framing by feminist advocates in securing the adoption of mainstreaming has been established elsewhere. The thesis examines the consequent potential for frame conflict between the norms and values of feminism and bureaucracy, and its implications for policy implementation. A key finding of the thesis is how frame conflict has been managed, or deferred, through a continual process of re-framing which is ultimately detrimental to policy implementation. Identifying and illuminating the underlying epistemological conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames takes us beyond a simplistic understanding of patriarchal resistance as an explanatory factor for the lack of further progress in mainstreaming. It demonstrates that mainstreaming is fundamentally challenging to civil service ways of working and knowing, going to the heart of the way people operate in, and make sense of, their world. In so doing it furthers our understanding of the fundamental paradox presented by mainstreaming identified above.

The thesis contends that the current dominant emphasis in feminist policy analysis on framing as strategic action is limited with respect to the insights it offers into the complex processes of implementation. Instead it is argued that there is a need to return to earlier constructions of framing as shaping, organising and constructing how we 'know' about the world. This 'frame' of framing takes forward our understandings of the institutional dynamics that frustrate the implementation of transformatory feminist policy. As a policy study of mainstreaming, the thesis, in turn, contributes to the wider policy literature through its analysis of the dynamics of, and problems presented by, processes of implementation.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

Preface

The motivations for this piece of research are personal, academic and social. They stem from the experience of working on various short-term projects connected with mainstreaming following my first degree, from which I developed an interest, not only in the mainstreaming policy itself, but also in policy studies and implementation more generally. Combined with my interest in and commitment to the feminist study of politics, this led to a desire to investigate the implications for the practice and study of policy implementation raised by the mainstreaming strategy.

Living in Edinburgh, and working for a short while for both the Governance of Scotland Forum at the University of Edinburgh and for the Scottish Executive just after devolution, I was surrounded by interest in devolution, and the general anticipation of 'difference' the new Scottish Parliament would bring. As a student of politics with a particular interest in feminism, I was particularly aware of the potential for the parliament to promote both the symbolic and substantive representation of women. While working at the Executive, I became more aware of the importance of the Executive as a factor in the success or failure of equality policies and increasingly interested in the issues raised by the emphasis on change of political culture which had underpinned the design of the Parliament, and the desire, and perhaps need, within the Scottish Office for continuity to ease the process of devolution.

In mainstreaming itself I saw the possibility, or an opportunity, for bringing feminist ideas and analysis into the work of governments on a more routine basis, and thus hopefully of achieving change for women and men 'on the ground'. I was also drawn to a strategy that emphasised the importance of the gendered, racialised and disabled ways we think about the world and how this perpetuates material structures of inequality.¹ At the same time, I was uneasy about the readiness of organisations and women / women's groups to support a strategy which had obvious dangers, among them the possibility for the feminist content of mainstreaming strategies to be very weak while rhetorical commitment to

¹ I am generally interested in the discursive as well as material ways that inequalities are reproduced, and in the contradiction between what I see as the pervasiveness of gender as an ordering principle and the views of many of my contemporaries that inequality between women and men is no longer an issue.

mainstreaming would enable governments to say they had 'placed equality at the heart of government'.

In Scotland, consensus on adopting a mainstreaming approach coincided with unusually extensive opportunities for feminist academics to influence policy development, leading to the publication of academic reports targeted specifically at policy audiences. While, as this thesis shows, these reports were influential in shaping mainstreaming policy, the activity of producing them undoubtedly diverted energy from generating more critical and academic work on the mainstreaming policy. As a co-author of one such report, I was keen to pursue some of the lines of inquiry which previously, there had not been a space for.

Abbreviations used in thesis

CDEG	Steering Committee on Equality between Women and Men
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CoE	Council of Europe
CoSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CSG	Consultative Steering Group
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DG	Directorate General
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
DSS	Department of Social Security
EC	European Commission
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECPR	European Consortium on Political Research
EER	Emmancipatie Effect Rapportage
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
ESF	European Structural Fund
EU	European Union
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FDP	German Liberal Party
GAD	Gender And Development
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
LGWC	Local Government Women's Committee
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament

MSPs	Members of the Scottish Parliament
NEC	National Executive Committee (Labour Party)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOW	New Opportunities for Women
PAET	Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment
PAFT	Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment
SCC	Scottish Constitutional Convention
SCOW	Scottish Convention of Women
SHD	Sustainable Human Development
SJAG	Scottish Women's Joint Action Group
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPICe	Scottish Parliament Information Centre
SSP	Scottish Socialist Party
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Council
STUC	Scottish Trades Unions Congress
SWC	Scottish Women's Commission
SWCG	Scottish Women's Coordination Group
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USGS	Unit for the Study of Government
WAD	Women And Development
WAG	Women's Advisory Group
WEU	Women and Equality Unit
WIB	Women's Issues Branch

WID	Women In Development
WIG	Women's Issues Group (of the Scottish Constitutional Convention)
WIRAG	Women's Issues Research Advisory Group
WIRC	Women's Issues Research Consultant
WISCF	Women in Scotland Consultative Forum
WNC	Women's National Commission
WU	Women's Unit

Introduction

Mainstreaming' is a new approach to equal opportunities. It is a strategy for *preventing inequalities* which may result from policy and decisions, by recognising the differential impact that such policies and decisions can have on different sections of the population. In doing so it aims both to promote equality and to produce 'better' policy making by generating policies which are more likely to achieve their aims and thus are both more effective and efficient. It contains an inherent critique of the abstract model of a citizen as white, middle class, male, heterosexual and able-bodied, which, often inadvertently, informs much policy making. Further, it aims to *promote equality* by making possible policies and decisions which, having considered the different needs of the populations concerned from the start, have a positive impact upon different groups. The reorganisation of the policy process required to do this is potentially transformative.

As a case of policy diffusion mainstreaming is remarkable. It has been adopted on a global scale by national and regional governments, by transnational and international organisations. It has attracted intense interest from academics, activists and policy actors and has spawned seminar series, research, reports and the production of mainstreaming tools and techniques. Despite this hive of activity no-where is mainstreaming fully implemented and both changes in working practice and concrete outcomes appear elusive.

This thesis addresses this central paradox of gender and equality mainstreaming: namely that the remarkable diffusion of the strategy and its widespread adoption has been in stark contrast to the lack of evidence for any significant change. Despite high levels of political will mainstreaming appears to elude implementation.

Based on understandings of the gendered nature of bureaucracy, and using the analytical tools of framing, a key aim of the thesis is to explore what it means to ask bureaucrats to work within a new frame.

Why Scotland? Why the Scottish Executive?

Devolution in the UK has resulted in a project of state rebuilding in Scotland in which a commitment to strengthen democracy, particularly through increasing and

enhancing participation, has been key. In this context, the policy of 'mainstreaming equality' was adopted to 'place equality at the heart of policymaking' (Scottish Executive, 1999, p. 12).

The opportunities afforded by constitutional change in the UK to embed new norms and values in institutional design have been well exploited. The widespread consensus across Scottish civil society that principles of participation and democracy should underpin a devolved Scotland was channelled through the work of the Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament into the ideological and practical design of the new institution. Feminists and women activists organised to ensure that the principle of equal opportunity was inextricably linked to the enhancement of democracy, and that a new Parliament would have a more equal balance of female and male representatives.

It is proposed elsewhere (Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Beveridge et al. 2000) that the context of devolution in Scotland, the building of new institutions and the involvement of women and women's organisations in this process, have created a favourable environment for the adoption of a mainstreaming strategy and for its potential to be transformative. Recent analysis of mainstreaming at UK and Scottish levels has found evidence for a more participatory understanding of the strategy in Scotland (Clavero and Daly, 2004). The extent to which, and how, these favourable contexts concerning the nature of constitutional change in Scotland affected the development of a mainstreaming strategy has not been studied directly. The thesis addresses this question, considering evidence for the impact of 'strategic' women and the wider women's movement, and of the participatory and democratic principles informing devolution on the development of mainstreaming in the Scottish Executive.

The Scottish Executive is chosen as the focus of the study as it has been noted as a conduit of continuity in the devolution process (Parry and Jones, 2000; Parry, 2001, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2005), yet in comparison to the parliament, received little attention by civic bodies in the run up to devolution (Pyper, 1999; Parry and Jones, 2000). It was less influenced by ideals of 'new politics' and the 'spirit of the CSG' as these agendas were spurned in favour of a reassurance that traditions of the Home Civil Service would be upheld (Parry and Jones, 2000). To study mainstreaming in the Scottish Executive is interesting as, in contrast to the Scottish Parliament, it is not a new institution in the traditional sense, and though there may be some moves to the creation of new norms, this is still on a small scale. The Scottish civil service

remains part of the Home Civil Service, and the Scottish Executive is strongly influenced by the operation and norms both of that and of Scottish governance pre devolution (Parry and Jones, 2000; Parry 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2005).

Conformity with the rest of UK civil service was seen as important in protecting the values of impartiality and incorruptibility within the civil service, especially by senior civil servants (Parry and Jones, 2000, Parry, 2001). The extent of carryover from the Scottish Office to the Scottish Executive was also evident at the level of design (Parry and Jones, 2000). Prior to devolution, the Scottish Office operated as a defender of Scottish interests, particularly during Thatcher years, which also resulted in the development of a 'siege mentality' (Ford and Casebow, 2002) which made it less accessible to civic groups. Combined with the lack of development within the Office of expertise on women's and equality issues this rendered the office largely inaccessible to Scottish women.

The civil service, and bureaucracy more generally, are not renowned as positive sites of struggle regarding gender or other equality. Analysis of the UK civil service has highlighted the importance of traditional ideas of how a civil servant should be and how they should work and the extent to which these are based upon the assumptions of white, male, middle class individuals (Watson, 1992; Puwar, 2001). Indeed, Parry (2003) has raised the question of whether the trend towards a wide pool of talent for particular posts may be inimical to the idea of a career civil service, and further whether the difficulties experienced by outsiders in 'fitting in' to the culture and practices of the civil service is an adverse commentary on those practices.

Why mainstreaming?

This thesis raises new questions which in turn spur its analysis. We pose the question as to whether the implementation of policies and strategies of mainstreaming is hampered not only by apparent shortfalls in terms of examples, blueprints and tools, nor indeed by resistance stemming from dominant patriarchal organisational cultures, but instead — or as well — as a result of a fundamental conflict between epistemological frames of bureaucratic and feminist worldviews. If we take seriously the idea that change in ways of working requires change in ways of knowing (Stanley and Wise, 1993), what is it we ask of policy makers when, informed by feminist analyses of the ways organisation is both nominally and

symbolically gendered and racialised, we promote a strategy of integrating an equalities perspective into all areas of their work? What happens in the case of a policy that is informed by a deeply constructivist and political agenda and that seeks to use the tools of rational bureaucracy to implement it? What happens when a traditional civil service is asked to implement a policy, which ultimately aims to undermine the principles on which it operates?

This thesis argues for an analysis of mainstreaming which locates these questions in the day-to-day interaction of policy makers involved in the implementation of mainstreaming. Building on the work of those who have applied a frame approach to understanding the adoption and varying success rates of mainstreaming, and to explicating the different framings of equality which underlie different instances of the strategy, the thesis emphasises the role of framing in constructing how we understand the world around us. It questions the extent to which attempts to strategically frame mainstreaming have been successful in creating a true synthesis between previously conflicting frames, rather than merely 'papering over' difference. It suggests that if the result of framing has been to disguise rather than resolve conflict, then conflict is likely to re-emerge as framings are put under stress in practice. Contrary to expectation, the specific case study illuminates how, rather than re-emerging in implementation as suggested, frame conflict has been managed, or deferred, through a continual process of re-framing (Morth, 2000) with detrimental consequences for implementation.

As the existing ways of understanding the world (extant frames) are seen as structuring the possibilities for future framings, the case study is placed within an analysis of the frame environment in which mainstreaming was adopted in the UK, and the different possibilities for framing at UK and Scottish levels. Through an analysis of key texts and interviews with participants it traces the development of framing both in promotion and development of the mainstreaming strategy and in its implementation within the Scottish Executive. Advocating an understanding of implementation as evolutionary, the thesis demonstrates how policy constructed through agenda-setting is reconstructed in implementation; implementation is itself agenda-setting.

The thesis is also concerned with mainstreaming as a case study of policy implementation and therefore with what mainstreaming can tell us about policy processes more generally. Mainstreaming can be considered a 'wicked issue' (Clarke and Stewart, 1997). It is seen to cut across departmental boundaries and therefore to

require a 'joined up' approach to government. The horizontal reach of mainstreaming is what defines it and differentiates it from previous vertical approaches to equality policy. As an 'intractable' policy issue, in/equality is seen to necessitate new ways of thinking about policy. The challenges which mainstreaming creates are, in many respects, common to other change agendas within public policy. The problems described could generically be understood as issues of non-implementation, except that I would argue that the concept of non-implementation is based on a model of implementation as the putting into practice of previously identified goals. They are particularly pertinent to the study of marginal policy areas, highlighting the extent to which, while mainstreaming aims to integrate equalities perspective into all policy, it remains to date a marginal activity.

Barrett (2004) has argued that a return to critical analyses of implementation which understand it as a political and evolutionary process are particularly relevant, given the present dominance of rational models of implementation and policy processes more generally in government and management discourse.

Through following a feminist approach to policy analysis, the thesis also parallels the intended process of mainstreaming by which the gendered implications of policy are exposed, by itself exposing the gendered nature of ways of working within the bureaucracy, and how these affect the implementation of mainstreaming. The literature on gender and bureaucracy has highlighted the embedded nature of processes of gendering within processes of organising (Acker, 1990; Witz, 1998). The importance of the state both in the reproduction of inequalities and as a potential source for the promotion of equality is the subject of much Feminist Policy Analysis (FPA) (Mazur, 2002).

The thesis adds to existing accounts of the role of women in engendering the devolution process in Scotland by providing an account of the less documented activities of strategic women in intervening to inform the framing of mainstreaming in Scotland and thus to push the participatory and democratic agenda of the policy.

Chapter structure

Chapter one has two key purposes; firstly it introduces the reader to the concept of mainstreaming as a strategy for promoting gender and other equality issues, and secondly it develops the case for building on the work of those who have variously

applied a 'frame analysis approach' to the study of mainstreaming. The chapter sets the scene for the study of mainstreaming in Scotland by exploring its origins and development at the transnational level. In particular it focuses on the role of the European Union, Council of Europe and the UN in promoting and disseminating the strategy. Through this exploration, the potential for mainstreaming to be developed, either as a radical strategy which aims to fundamentally change the institution in which it is practised, or as an integrationist approach working within the existing norms and values of the adopting organisation, is identified.

Understanding mainstreaming as the latest in a series of projects to 'engender the state' by feminist activists and academics, it is suggested that attempts to develop a radical approach will be in conflict with forces working to resist organisational change, especially as the form of change in question will challenge individual as well as organisational norms and values. Despite this inherent tension between the goals of a transformatory version of mainstreaming and the values of existing organisations, there has been widespread adoption of mainstreaming by governmental organisations. To explain this seeming contradiction, I introduce the idea, explored throughout the thesis, that conflict inherent within the mainstreaming strategy has been obscured by ambiguity as to what adopting a mainstreaming strategy actually means. Following work on frame conflict (Schön and Rein, 1994), I hypothesise that this conflict is likely to (re)emerge in practice as ambiguity is necessarily reduced during implementation.

Following a discussion of mainstreaming at the European level the chapter then reviews existing applications of framing to the study of mainstreaming and identifies shortfalls in the way the concept has been applied thus far. Existing work has identified both the way in which 'strategical framing' by mainstreaming advocates necessarily involves attempts to present the policy as compatible with dominant norms and values (frame resonance) and the way that the need for frame resonance has weakened the transformatory potential of the strategy. The importance of initial framings for setting the parameters of future framings is noted as the danger of 'rhetorical entrapment' (Verloo, 2001). On the other hand, it is suggested that the practice of applying a mainstreaming approach may itself lead to transformatory effects even where it has been framed within the language of bureaucratic rationality (Woodward, 1999, 2001).

Shifting the focus away from the ability of actors to strategically frame mainstreaming, the chapter argues that attention should be paid to the question of

whether processes of frame alignment successfully overcome differences between bureaucratic and feminist frames, or whether continuing frame conflict is to be found during implementation. It is argued that greater attention needs to be paid not only to the importance of underlying gender equality frames in different versions of mainstreaming (Verloo, 2004), but also to whether framing strategies have created new understandings or simply masked difference. Woodward has questioned the extent that it is possible to 'merely insert gender into an organisation designed with man in mind' (2003, p. 66), and has exposed the central paradox of mainstreaming; that it aims to use the rational tools of bureaucracy to achieve change that is at odds with the norms and values of bureaucracy as currently constituted. Developing this work, by exploring what it means to ask bureaucrats to work within a new frame, is identified as a key aim of the thesis.

Having discussed the application of framing as a tool of analysis for explaining the adoption and differential successes of mainstreaming strategies, the chapter identifies framing as a significant process in the exposition of the mainstreaming concept as a new approach to equality. In light of this discussion, the chapter concludes with a deconstruction of the definition of mainstreaming given in the introduction, revealing the way in which this definition is itself a product of framing processes.

Chapter two locates the analytical approach of the thesis within the 'discursive turn' to policy analysis that has characterised much recent work in this area. It also identifies the work with the aims of a Feminist Policy Analysis approach, both as an analytical tool applied to the study of mainstreaming, and as a means to gendering the study of policy (Mazur, 2002). A discursive approach to mainstreaming is appropriate because both the construction and reconstruction of mainstreaming strategies are discursive processes in which problem representation and framing strategies are key discursive practices. The concept of framing, introduced in chapter one, is explored and elaborated upon to identify the particular understanding and application of the concept intended here.

It is suggested that recent work on framing and mainstreaming, especially as informed by Social Movement Theory, has moved away from an understanding of the construction of new frames as creating a new way of seeing and understanding in which both previously existing ways of seeing are changed, as developed in e.g. Schön's concept of generative metaphor. Instead, the process is often described at the level of presentation. The difference between these two uses could be

summarised as that between framing as an 'instrumental' or 'sense-making' activity.¹ In our attention to the ways that those involved in framing must be sensitive to the need for frame resonance with dominant values, framing has become a process of making something appear as something else, rather than reconstructing it through language so that it actually is.

Bringing back an emphasis on framing as shaping, organising and constructing how we 'know' about the world suggests that securing the adoption of a policy or idea by a given target audience is only one element in successful framing strategies; for successful operation the framing must 'work' at a more fundamental, or sense-making, level. Organisations which adopt mainstreaming because it *appears* to fit with their existing goals will be confronted with difficulty when the move from adoption to implementation exposes that this new instrumental framing has not translated into a new organisational understanding. The lack of understanding about how x does y thus exposed may create a sense of discomfort or dissonance for the actors concerned, as the disjuncture between their instrumental acceptance of the relationship and their lived experience of it is revealed.

Having established the wider framework in which analysis is conducted, the chapter turns to more specific discussion of methodology and method. Key documents and interviews with participants are identified as expressions of discourse, neither providing access to some original 'truth' about events and meanings, nor as the totality of expression possible, but rather as providing insight into some of the various ways in which, at a particular moment and for particular audiences, such events were constructed through the interplay of conscious and/or subconscious framings. The idea of intertextuality points to the importance for analysis of the relations between texts, both in terms of what texts borrow from each other, and of what they omit. Finally the chapter introduces the reader to three approaches to the study of texts which have informed the analysis, explains the actual methods used in the analysis of texts, both documents and interviews, and reflects on this process.

Chapter three explores the process by which mainstreaming came to be the official approach to equal opportunities of the UK government and suggests this process should be understood in the context of a shift in relations between women's

¹ Weick, KE, (1995) 'Sense-Making in Organisations'.

organisations and the state which has occurred since the 1970s. Further, following Banaszak et al (2003) it is suggested that current interactions between the state, women's organisations and the equality agenda will be structured by previous interactions as well as by the characteristics of both actors and the political context.

In this light, the chapter provides a brief history of the development of gender policy machinery in the UK and discusses issues of state engagement. The general move to greater state interaction by the women's movement(s) during the 1980s and 1990s is explored with a particular focus on the work of Local Government Women's Committees as a precursor to mainstreaming strategies. The development of women's policy machinery within government and the main opposition party is described and understood as a result of several factors including women's demands from within and without political parties (and the strength of European feminism), increasing recognition of the importance of the 'women's vote' among political parties, and of developments at a UN level, in particular the UN Decade for Women, 1975 – 1985, and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. It is argued that the influence of the UN's agenda on women's issues at this time also set up a channel for the diffusion of the mainstreaming strategy, primarily through and in response to the Beijing conference.

The Labour victory at the 1997 General Election is shown both to have created new opportunities for advancing women's issues, and at the same time, to undercut the position of feminist analysis. In particular, the modernisation agenda of New Labour, and the project of the 'Third Way' are seen as creating ambiguous positions for women. Having discussed the development of policy machineries for women following the 1997 election, the chapter turns in the final section to explore the consequences of political contexts for the framing of mainstreaming at a UK level.

Chapter four moves from the UK level to consider the background to the development of a mainstreaming strategy in Scotland. While there have been similar shifts towards greater state engagement by feminists at both Scottish and UK levels, the distinctiveness of Scottish feminist organising, the interrelated factor of devolution, and differences between the UK and Scottish state have resulted in significantly different state feminist relations and a different political climate. This chapter is concerned with these differences, and how they have structured the possible framings of the mainstreaming strategy. The strategy of women and women's organisations who aimed to engender constitutional change in Scotland is identified as a dual strategy concerned both with securing a 'place' for women in

any new parliament, and also with ensuring institutionalised 'voice' for women in their diversity. It is argued that communication between women and Scottish government bodies was initially constrained by the different appreciative systems (Vickers, 1965) of government officials and women activists, to the extent that the two groups were seen as coming from different worlds. The chapter discusses the influence of the UN conference in Beijing in spurring dialogue between the two sides, which in turn led both to a recognition of the difficulties of communication, and of the need to develop knowledge and expertise on women's issues within the Scottish Office.

The chapter then traces the development of mechanisms for bringing both elite and 'ordinary' women's voices into the Scottish Office through the establishment of an advisory group to the Minister with responsibility for women's issues, and of a consultative forum for women. Despite these developments, it is argued that the main focus of those campaigning for women's representation in the run up to devolution had been on securing place, rather than voice, for women. This left the mechanisms for securing the second strand of the strategy underdeveloped, especially with regard to the role of the administration, which itself had been a largely neglected dimension of devolution (Pyper, 1999). The space / void thus created was filled by mainstreaming, it became the mechanism to carry forward the second strand of the strategy for representation, and emerged as a means of developing knowledge within the Scottish Office, and facilitating communication between women and the administration. Unlike the mechanisms for securing a place for women, however, mainstreaming was not subject to wide debate or scrutiny. The chapter demonstrates the extent to which, mirroring its promotion at the European and UN levels, mainstreaming was an elite strategy which, in Scotland, was accepted and 'bolted on' rather than internalised and translated, by most devolution actors, other than a small group of strategic women. Packaged as part of the existing consensus on the place of women's representation as a fundamental part of a more democratic politics, mainstreaming appeared to a large extent both common-sense and irrefutable. Combined with the lack of attention, by feminist and non-feminist promoters of a 'new politics' in Scotland, to the administration's role in this process, the result was that possible tensions between mainstreaming and the administration were left un-interrogated.

In the final section of the chapter, the consequences of this common-sense frame are discussed, and it is argued that it both eased the adoption of mainstreaming and also disguised and deferred possible resistance. Further, the extent to which

mainstreaming was adopted without significant discussion is seen as rendering it more porous to the context and norms in which it was adopted: it was imbued with the democratic and participatory values of the wider discourse of devolution.

Chapter five analyses the process by which mainstreaming was translated and internalised within Scotland, and the official expression of the policy as constructed within the Scottish Executive's Equality Strategy. The Equality Strategy, it is argued, represents a key moment for the mainstreaming strategy in Scotland, with the potential to act as a source of 'collective memory' making for the Scottish Executive, and bounding the future possibilities for framing; it is a key agent in the discursive construction of mainstreaming. The Strategy does not exist in isolation, however, but rather draws both explicitly and implicitly on other government documents and external mainstreaming texts. This chapter identifies and analyses the relationship between the Strategy and a selection of key texts which have informed it. In particular, it traces the development and reconstruction, or reframing, of different framings of mainstreaming within and between the texts.

As part of this analysis, the relationships between the authors of the selected texts are explored to provide evidence for the claim that this group constitutes an epistemic community (Haas, 1992) on mainstreaming. This is established through tracing the interconnection of the actors concerned, and the possibilities for ideational exchange, through membership of networks and organisations, attendance at seminars and conferences, and involvement in other agendas. The complexity and density of these interrelationships is depicted in diagrammatic form (see figure 2, page 124).

The chapter demonstrates how, through various reframings, the democracy frame of mainstreaming is reiterated and strengthened as the policy is translated from European-level conceptual thinking, through Scottish reports on mainstreaming, to the publication of the *Equality Strategy*. In the final section, the Equality Strategy itself is analysed, and found to contain a potentially unstable combination of bureaucratic and feminist framings of mainstreaming and equality. In conclusion, the possibility of frame conflict arising from this combination is raised, to be analysed further in the context of implementation.

Chapter six shifts our attention from the discursive construction of mainstreaming through documents, to its reconstruction in implementation, as studied through interviews with those closely involved in this process. Following an opening section

describing the work carried out in the two 'mainstreaming pilots' in the areas of Housing and Education and Schools, the chapter turns to a discussion of the challenges which faced those attempting to implement the mainstreaming strategy. These challenges are grouped into three main areas, those relating to problems of moving from theory to practice, those relating to issues of collaborative work, and finally those relating to issues of institutionalisation. In this discussion, the aim is to provide a rich description or picture, of what it is like to work in this area within this institution. While the chapter centres around the identification of various challenges, it is also concerned with the innovative responses these challenges elicited, and the way that many of these challenges worked as double-edged swords, providing both opportunities and obstacles.

The challenges identified are often generic to policy-making in any area, though at the same time, they also often have particular implications for, or are exacerbated by, specific issues of working in the area of equalities. For instance, high workloads, time pressures, changing agendas and the complexity of policy processes were all identified as complicating factors by interviewees; they are also recognised as issues in the wider policy literature. At the same time, persuading colleagues of the need for mainstreaming work within this context was made more difficult by the lack of institutional power of the Equality Unit and by, in some quarters, the view that equality was still a luxury, to be addressed after other, more fundamental issues. In response to these various challenges, interviewees attempted to make their agendas 'fit' with more mainstream agendas, goals and initiatives. In the concluding section of the chapter, these response strategies are discussed in more detail. In particular, flexibility and the ability to take advantage of opportunities were seen both as positive skills leading to innovative working methods, and as necessary responses to an uncertain world. Flexibility, in essence, was the solution to the problem of not fitting: by processes of constant renegotiation and reframing, actors were able to achieve some moves forward, but with negative consequences for learning and feedback.

Chapter seven provides a further level of analysis of the difficulties that mainstreaming equality poses for the Scottish Executive. In the previous chapter, the presence of frame conflict, between the transformative aims of a radical mainstreaming agenda and the 'normal' working culture of the Scottish Executive, was uncovered. This chapter examines the different ways of knowing on which these frames are predicated. Reinterpreting the challenges described in the previous chapter, it is argued that the implementation of mainstreaming can be understood

as a knowledge problem, at both instrumental and sense-making levels. I argue that the need for policy actors to make mainstreaming 'fit' with wider agendas results in a sense of discomfort, expressed as 'not knowing exactly what to do', as this need conflicts with the radical critique contained within mainstreaming of bureaucratic ways of knowing, or epistemology.

The chapter first establishes the theoretical basis of the argument for seeing mainstreaming as a knowledge problem, drawing on the work of feminist empiricism and standpoint epistemologies and on gendered institutions, before providing evidence from the study for this based on reinterpretations of the issues raised in the previous chapter. These examples are divided into two categories, those pertaining to knowledge issues operating at a surface or instrumental level, and those operating at a deep or sense-making level. In conclusion, I argue that the impact of mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive has been destabilising in a way that civil servants do not, at present, have the vocabulary to fully articulate. So far, these processes of destabilisation, while potentially leading to a positive questioning and rethinking of traditional bureaucratic ways of working and knowing, have stopped short of the necessary process of consolidation required to achieve this. Instead, discomfort and ambiguity have been masked through reframing strategies.

The **thesis conclusions** refer back to the difficulties of communicating between the worlds of policy makers and activist women, identified in chapter 4, and argue that through mainstreaming, this problem has re-emerged within the Executive itself. Both individuals within the Executive and the organisation itself are literally and symbolically 'in two minds', attempting to combine two distinct epistemological positions. The two minds of the organisation are embodied within the distinctions drawn between 'mainstream' and Equality Unit civil servants, that is between pragmatic generalists and specialist idealists. Again, the two minds are seen as based upon different appreciative systems and result in a lack of shared understanding.

Fundamental to the 'reorganising' of policy processes required by mainstreaming is an unsettling of taken-for-granted behaviours and assumptions, which need to be continually questioned in order that a gender perspective be integrated. But our understanding of institutionalisation is one of routinized, taken-for-granted behaviour that is disrupted by continual questioning.

This finding calls for a far less instrumental application of the concept of framing, one that recognises that inquiry needs to go beyond analysis of the success of framing strategies to get an issue adopted, to consider the implications of possible unresolved tensions within the newly proffered, and often instrumental frame. Identifying this 'deeper level' at which frame conflict operates gives rise to the question of possibilities for conflict resolution. The continual processes of reframing identified in chapter six are seen to weaken the potential for 'frame reflective discourse' (Schön and Rein, 1994) to offer a way out of conflict. Following Morth (2000), reframing is seen as managing rather than resolving frame conflict. Ironically, implementation is constrained by the management of frame conflict.

Identifying and illuminating the underlying epistemological conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames takes us beyond a simplistic understanding of patriarchal resistance as an explanatory factor for the lack of further progress in mainstreaming. It demonstrates that mainstreaming is fundamentally challenging to civil service ways of working and knowing, going to the heart of the way people operate in, and make sense of, their world. In so doing it furthers our understanding of the fundamental paradox presented by mainstreaming identified at the beginning of this introduction.

1

‘Mainstreaming’ —the emergence of a new approach to equality?

‘Mainstreaming’ is a new approach to equal opportunities. It is a strategy for *preventing inequalities* which may result from policy and decisions, by recognising the differential impact that such policies and decisions can have on different sections of the population. In doing so it aims both to promote equality and to produce ‘better’ policy making by generating policies which are more likely to achieve their aims and thus are both more effective and efficient. It contains an inherent critique of the abstract model of a citizen as white, middle class, male, heterosexual and able-bodied, which, often inadvertently, informs much policy making. Further, it aims to *promote equality* by making possible policies and decisions which, having considered the different needs of the populations concerned from the start, have a positive impact upon different groups. The reorganisation of the policy process required to do this is potentially transformative (Rees, 1998, 1999; Woodward, 1999, 2001, 2003; Verloo, 1999, 2001).

While in Scotland the mainstreaming strategy applies to a broad range of ‘equality groups’,² most work on mainstreaming has been specifically concerned with promoting equality between women and men. ‘Gender mainstreaming’, as this is known, is built upon the feminist insight that work which apparently relates to and affects women and men in the same way, i.e. which appears ‘gender *neutral*’, is in

² Mainstreaming relates to the groups covered by the definition of Equal Opportunities in the Scotland Act. The Act defines Equal Opportunities as: ‘The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people because of their sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or because of other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions’ (Scotland Act, 1998, Schedule 5, L2)

fact often merely gender *blind* – in other words its differential impact is obscured by lack of knowledge or interest in its gendered consequences. By concentrating on the way that structures and systems reproduce gendered relations, it shifts the focus away from a discussion of equality in terms of women's sameness to, or difference from, men.

While taking gender as a primary focus, more sophisticated versions of gender mainstreaming may be sensitive to the significant differences among women as a group and among men as a group around, for example, race / ethnicity, class, sexuality (dis)ability and age, and will consider the impact of the intersectionality of these differences. Though gender mainstreaming may consider differences among women and among men, the applicability of mainstreaming as an approach for addressing issues of inequality for other groups is contested, reflecting debates about the relationship between gender inequality and other inequalities within feminist theory more widely (Walby, undated, p. 14). While Rees (1998, 1999) and Booth and Bennett (2002, p. 431) believe that "[mainstreaming] is equally accessible and applicable to other areas of inequality and indeed to any form or scale of organization", Verloo (2001, p. 21) argues that it is not a 'one size fits all approach' which can, unproblematically, be transferred to other areas. Squires (2003, p. 24) argues that considering equality and diversity rather than simply gender equality will necessitate taking on board 'the normative debates and theoretical developments surrounding identifies other than gendered identities' and suggests that theories of deliberative democracy provide a useful basis for thinking about a deliberative and participatory development of diversity mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming has been heralded as a new approach to equality which combines the benefits of three previous approaches, the first based upon ideas of equal treatment, the second on the principles of positive action and the third on the concept of diversity, but also takes these further by placing attention on the previously under-scrutinised realm of 'mainstream' policy and practice (Beveridge et al., 2000, p. 386).³ Both in the presentation of mainstreaming, and in the analysis of its uptake, the concept of 'framing' has been mobilised. The concept of framing and the approach of frame analysis are discussed more fully in chapter two. Briefly, framing is understood as the process of using existing understandings of the world

³ As discussed later, there has been some dispute over whether mainstreaming relates only to the third of these approaches but is compatible with the previous two, or whether by definition it entails all three.

to interpret and understand new information. 'Strategic framing' is the practice of using (a combination of) existing frames to gain acceptance for an idea or practice by a particular group or groups. The second half of this chapter draws out these applications of framing within the mainstreaming literature and develops the themes that are to be explored in later chapters, marking the distinction between previous uses of framing and the way in which I wish to employ it in this thesis. In discussing a concept such as mainstreaming, for which its framing or presentation has been so significant, I am aware of the difficulty or even impossibility of presenting a purely 'factual' account of that concept. Accepting this, I begin with an exposition of mainstreaming that will be deconstructed as the chapter develops.

The origins of mainstreaming

Woodward (2001, p. 14) argues that while the theoretical roots of gender mainstreaming lie in gender analysis and feminist theory, its practical roots are found in the traditions of radical social movements for the developing world, the disabled and the environment (2001, p. 12). In the field of development, the work of women activists in placing first 'women' and later 'gender' onto the international development agenda (primarily through the organs and networks of the United Nation's Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace 1975 – 1985), has provided an important frame which future mainstreaming strategies have utilised (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002b, p. 357). The UN's Decade for Women focussed on the issue of economic development and specifically on the issue of Women in Development (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002b, p. 348) and was marked by three World conferences, in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). These conferences spawned parallel NGO forums and together they provided new opportunities for women's groups both to lobby governments and to form transnational advocacy networks (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002b, p. 348) at a time when the 'second wave' of the feminist movement was growing in strength. The rise of an international women's movement, concerned with increasing the visibility of women and the importance of gender in the policies, programmes and projects of international development agencies from the 1980s led to the development of a sequence of strategies to engage those agencies (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002a, 2002b), culminating in an approach which was subsequently developed as 'gender mainstreaming'.

This sequence of approaches to gender equality in the field of development can be divided into three key phases: 'Women in Development' (WID), designed in an attempt to overcome the gender blind policies and programmes which had dominated the development agenda prior to the 1970s, 'Women and Development' (WAD), which focussed on positive action measures in the form of dedicated programmes for women in developing countries, and 'Gender and Development' (GAD), based upon dissatisfaction with the way that both WID and WAD approaches had left the 'mainstream' of development policies and programmes untouched. It was hoped that through identifying gender as an integral part of the development process, the GAD approach would transform this mainstream.

While the first two approaches focus on women as a subgroup outwith the mainstream of development, the last approach sees 'men and women as interactive links in the development process and signalled a recognition that discussing the role of women independently from that of men was not adequate' (Bhatta, 2001, p. 19). Thus, while the WID approach attempted to incorporate women into structures designed to 'male' norms (the women's perspective), the GAD approach attempted to change the structures upon which these norms were based (mainstreaming). In theory, GAD recognises not only differences between women and men but also differences within these groups and the existence of multiple discrimination and disadvantage.

It is commonly agreed that the international "launch" of the mainstreaming concept took place during the United Nations Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985.⁴ Paragraph 114 of the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* explicitly called for a mainstreaming approach stating that:

The incorporation of women's issues in all areas and sectors and at the local, national, regional and international levels should be institutionalized. To this end, appropriate machinery should be established or strengthened, and further legislative action taken. Sectoral policies and plans should be developed, and the effective participation of women in development should be integrated both in those plans and in the formulation and implementation of mainstream programmes and projects and should not be confined solely to statements of intent within plans or to small-scale, transitory projects relating to women (UN, 1986).

⁴ In their 1998 report on mainstreaming, the Council of Europe 'Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming' cite this as the first time the term appeared in international texts as a new concept (1998, p. 13)

Along with the formal adoption of the GAD approach, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also adopted the policy framework of Sustainable Human Development (SHD) in the 1990s. In the context of the commitment to mainstreaming in the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies*, and its adoption in the Beijing Platform for Action⁵, gender equality advocates began to promote a gender mainstreaming strategy in the mid 1990s, explicitly linking it to the UNDP's SHD mandate. Pollack and Hafner-Burton argue that framing mainstreaming to resonate with the goals of SHD, and thus as a fundamental element of human development, was key in committing the UNDP to the systematic incorporation of gender mainstreaming strategies throughout all issue-areas of development policy (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002b, p. 357).⁶

The development arena was thus central to the development of the gender mainstreaming rationale. Mainstreaming in the Environment sector meanwhile has been the leading example of a means of achieving the horizontal integration of policy issues across governmental activities at a national level. In 1992 the world's governments signed up to Agenda 21 — an environmental strategy to promote sustainable development arising from an international summit in Rio which promoted the concept of mainstreaming environmental issues. The influence of environmental tools such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is evident in the design of tools for gender mainstreaming, for example, the Gender Impact Assessment or the Dutch Emancipatie Effect Rapportage (EER) (Mossink, 2001, p. 10). As well as its uses in the development and environmental fields, mainstreaming has also been applied in the context of integrating disabled or 'special' students into 'mainstream' education since the 1960s (Geyer, 1999, 2000), and is still used in this way today.

Thus, by the close of the 'Decade for Women', the idea of 'mainstreaming' was not wholly alien to policy makers and other government actors. During the 1990s, the concept of 'gender mainstreaming' was developed, refined and increasingly vigorously promoted. The UN continued to be a significant actor in the promotion and dissemination of the gender mainstreaming strategy, but was joined by other supranational actors such as the European Union and Council of Europe (Verloo, 1999, p. 2).

⁵ This is discussed more later in the chapter

⁶ For a discussion of mainstreaming and SHD see Bhatta (2001).

The development of Gender Mainstreaming at European Level

The increasing role of the European Institutions such as the European Commission in pushing this gender policy has been explained in terms of three key factors:

- The activities of gender advocates for whom these institutions provided political opportunities not available at the national level;
- Endogenous changes within the institutions themselves which made them more sympathetic to gender equality (such as the entry of the Nordic states to the E.U. in 1995⁷ and the new Santer Commission of that year which contained a record number of five women, and a strong commitment to equal opportunities);
- The benefits these institutions saw in pursuing their own aims through gender policies.

In the early 1970s strengthening EC social policy had been a way of enhancing the popular legitimacy of the European Community (Meehan 1990, cited in Mazey, 1998, p. 138). More recently, mainstreaming has offered actors within the European Commission, Parliament and also within NGOs, opportunities to further their own agendas (Geyer, 1999). For the Commission it has been a chance to expand the EU's policy making sphere, while for the Parliament it has also increased its leverage over the Council of Ministers.

Mainstreaming in the EU

Mazey suggests that the EU can be seen as an example of Baumgartner and Jones' (1991) 'alternative institutional venue', serving as an avenue of appeal for European feminists frustrated by lack of access to, and influence on, their national governments (1998, p. 132; 2001, p. 19). The promotion of a feminist agenda within Europe was not initially a straightforward response to a concern in the EU for gender equality however. The opportunity for a feminist intervention was provided by French concerns over the possible need to harmonize social costs to employers

⁷ The Nordic states had both a strong commitment to gender equality and a longer history of mainstreaming strategies.

within the common market arising from national variations in differential wage rates for men and women: the French government was concerned that a policy to attract women into work should not be undercut by others states paying women less (Hart, 2003, p. 120). The resulting Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, 1957, established the legal basis of equal pay and was picked up by feminists active in national equal pay campaigns in the 1970s. In the Defrenne test-case the European Court of Justice ruled that the article had direct applicability in member states, thus providing EC policy-makers and the women's lobby with a juridical hook on which to hang their demands for further EC sex equality legislation, though with its own problems. As Hart (2003, p. 121) comments, issues must be made to fit juridical hooks rather than the other way round, thus the issues pursued may not always be the most deserving or urgent.

While providing a resource for women's lobbying, article 119 did not specifically authorize the Council to introduce secondary legislation on sex equality. Constrained by the weak basis of EC and later EU competence in this area the European Commission turned to the 'soft' policy instruments of Recommendations and Positive Action Programmes to promote work on gender equality. Six EC Directives were adopted between 1975 and 1992, framed within the liberal perspective of equal rights, with the exception of the last – the Directive on the protection of pregnant women from exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace and on rights to maternity leave – which was arguably based upon a recognition of the need to treat women differently from men to ensure equality (Mazey, 1998, p. 141). Mazey argues these 'soft' instruments paved the way for gender mainstreaming by raising awareness of sex discrimination among employers, trade unions and the public generally, and by incrementally broadening out the policy agenda from issues of equal pay (Mazey, 2001, p. 23). She further suggests that the EU has since provided the women's lobby with an arena unencumbered by previous policies or vested interests in the equality sector and a pluralist and open decision-making structure with multiple 'access points' to decision makers (Mazey, 1998). In the 1980s EC positive action measures for gender equality were complimented by support for training and employment projects through New Opportunities for Women (NOW) and a series of transnational expert networks, all of which facilitated the networking of women's groups across the EU (Rees, 2002). As a result of the overlap of membership between national, transnational and international women's networks, the impact of the UN's Decade for Women fed into the EU institutions.

The shift to a more neo-liberal frame within several member states during the 1980s and 1990s and concerns with lowering employers' costs created a climate which was not conducive to the introduction of new equality legislation and the extension of existing directives (Mazey, 1998, p. 149). In this policy climate the strategy of mainstreaming received increasing attention as an adaptation of existing EU equality policies (Mazey, 2001, p. 20). As a strategy which did not appear to have immediate or explicit cost implications, and one that did not require new legislation, mainstreaming seemed a more possible approach to pursuing gender equality (Mazey, 2001, p. 32). Mainstreaming was promoted in the Third and Fourth Action Programmes on Equality between Women and Men (1991 – 1995 and 1996 – 2000), defined in the Third Action Programme as the integration of equality into mainstream policy formulation and implementation (EOC, 1996, p. 1). During the 1990s, the European Commission was a key driver behind the increasing topicality of mainstreaming in Europe and funded several transnational research projects to develop mainstreaming strategies and tools and to share good practice.⁸

Also during the 1990s, European women's networks became increasingly involved both in pushing gender policies through the European institutions and in transnational women's networks, creating further links between the EU's and UN's work on gender (Hoskyns, 1996) with the result that a "velvet triangle" of feminist bureaucrats, trusted academics and organized voices in the women's movement' developed (Woodward, 2004, pp. 77 – 78). The European Women's Lobby (EWL), set up in 1990 and funded by the European Commission, played an important role in lobbying on gender equality and in coordinating activities of those advocating gender equality; coordinating the lobbying activities of 48 national and European NGOs, it is the 'official' women's lobby in Brussels (Hoskyns, 1991). The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of 1996 represented an important opportunity for the women's advocacy coalition to embed broader equality policy into revised EU treaties with the EWL played a key lobbying role. The 1996 IGC was much more

⁸ Examples include the EOC—led transnational study of mainstreaming in local government undertaken in 1997; and the *Criteria for Success in Gender Mainstreaming* project led by researchers at Sheffield Hallam University in 1998 – 99. Both were funded under the EC Fourth Medium Term Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996 – 2000). Other collaborative research has been funded under the European Commission's Targeted Socio—Economic Research Fund (TSER). For example, *Predicting the Impact of Policy*, a project which aimed to develop a gender—auditing model for EU member—states, involved participants from Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK. See www.liv.ac.uk/~scooper/pip.html#summary. The project resulted in the publication *Making Women Count* (Beveridge et al, 1999).

open than previous conferences and the agenda consequently less amenable to elite control (Mazey and Richardson, 1997; Mazey, 2000b).

A further strategic development in gender mainstreaming occurred in December 1996, when the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution which established a form of conditionality for the receipt of support from European Structural Funds (ESF).⁹ In the period 2000 – 2006 all Member States are required by this resolution to gender mainstream all policies and programmes that receive Structural Funds. This places greater emphasis on equality considerations being integrated into the design of programmes, in implementation and in monitoring and evaluation, and all organisations seeking support from the Structural Funds now have to demonstrate their project's contribution to progressing equality between women and men. According to Woodward (2001, p. 10) this requirement has been especially important in stimulating interest in mainstreaming in member states.

Gender equality has also been a focus of the European Employment Strategy (EES), coordinated through the open method of coordination (OMC) (Rubery, 2003). In 1997 equal opportunities between women and men was established as one of the four pillars of the employment strategy and in the following year a commitment to gender mainstream all policies, under all four pillars, was added to the guidelines. Through the OMC member states submit national action plans detailing how they will reach common agreed targets to the European Commission on the EES. Rubery (2003) has argued that, in principle at least, there is 'considerable complementarity between the OMC and the notion of gender mainstreaming', yet her discussion of gender mainstreaming within the EES also demonstrates the shortcomings and limitations of this approach. The visibility of the commitment to gender equality has decreased; equal opportunities is no longer one of the four pillars but instead one guideline out of ten, with Rubery argues, implications for the political significance which member states will attach to it.

The most significant year for mainstreaming arguably occurred in 1995. Mainstreaming efforts within the EU and the increasing connections between feminists working through European and Transnational networks were strengthened through the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women of that year (a continuation from those held during the Decade for Women). The conference, held

⁹ Official Journal C 386, 20.12.1996

in Beijing, was attended by 30,000 women and governments from 189 countries (European Commission, 2000) and gender mainstreaming was formerly adopted in the Platform for Action which was agreed at the end of the conference. This endorsement was extremely significant in locating mainstreaming on the agenda of both the UN and member countries with many of these, including the UK, adopting a national plan for gender mainstreaming (despite the fact that there were no guidelines as to how to develop or implement the policy). The Beijing Conference is credited with the entry of the concept into the mainstream of international public policy (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000, p. 433). The Platform for Action calls for the promotion of the policy of gender mainstreaming, stating that:

Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of 'mainstreaming' a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively (UN, 1995).

The involvement of the EU in the preparation of the Beijing Declaration and its observer status at the UN prompted the European Commission's Communication on mainstreaming in 1996 (COM (96) 67 final) (Interview with Anne Havenor, cited in Mazey (2000b)). The communication commits the EU to 'promote equality between men and women in all activities and policies at all levels'.

The Council of Europe

The Beijing Conference was also a key impetus for the Council of Europe's mainstreaming strategy.¹⁰ A 'Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming' was established in 1995 by the Steering Committee on Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) as part of its input into the preparation for the Council's positions for the Conference. The group was chaired by academic and mainstreaming advocate, Mieke Verloo. In total there were eight members, two representatives of the CDEG and six specialists in the 'field of equality between women and men'. The report of the group's work was published in May 1998 (CoE., 1998) followed by a summary in February 1999. The report has been very influential both in terms of promoting mainstreaming as a policy and in helping to define that policy.

¹⁰ The Council of Europe (CoE) is the continent's oldest political organisation, founded in 1949, and has membership from 46 countries. The key work areas of the CoE include democracy and human rights, social cohesion, the security of citizens and democratic values and cultural diversity.

The Group of Specialists report on gender mainstreaming

As the first major European publication on mainstreaming, the report of the Group of Specialists *Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices* (Council of Europe, 1998) occupied a pivotal position within the development of the strategy, effectively constituting a case of policy design (Verloo, 1998). The membership of the Group, which represented both a high level of expertise in the field of gender equality, and strong feminist credentials, was therefore particularly interesting. The Group gave particular consideration to their definition of mainstreaming, which emphasised the inherently transformational nature of the strategy:

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.

The thinking behind the definition, set out in the report, was that '[g]ender mainstreaming is a political process as well as a technical one. It involves new ways of devising and approaching policies, shifts in organisational or in institutional culture and will lead to changes in societal structures', gender mainstreaming as also seen to include 'the full participation of women in all aspects of life as well as the analysis of all proposals concerning general or sectoral policies and programmes from a gender equality perspective' (CoE, 1998, p. 12). The authors thus linked mainstreaming to the issue of gender balance in policy and decision making, and in turn presented gender balance as 'important for society as a whole' (1998, p. 9). They also linked it firmly to the concept of democracy.

The function of the Group of Specialists was to aid the development of the Council of Europe's gender mainstreaming strategy by preparing 'a conceptual framework and a methodology for mainstreaming gender equality and identify[ing] techniques, tools and actors for integrating and evaluating the gender dimension in an effective and visible way'.¹¹ The report was also used to promote a feminist inspired transformatory approach to mainstreaming in language that would be acceptable to both feminists and 'mainstream' policy actors (Verloo, 1998). As the aim of the report was to 'stimulate the various policy actors ... to initiate concrete actions in

¹¹ CoE 1998, p. 5

the field of gender mainstreaming, and to facilitate their initiatives'¹² it was important that it did not alienate this section of its readership.

The report emphasised the *unconscious* and *unintentional* reproduction of existing inequalities in policy making, the fit between mainstreaming and current political and economic changes, and the potential of the strategy to further existing aims of the CoE such as human rights and democracy. The authors' stated that '[b]y taking the gender equality perspective into account, policies will be better defined in terms of the real needs of women and men. The lives of all people, both women and men, will thus improve. In this sense, gender mainstreaming is a real win-win strategy' (CoE, 1998, p. 20).

The report also addressed its feminist audiences, setting the discussion of practical and technical issues within the context of a 'conceptual framework' concerned with the problematic of gender equality, and the relationship of mainstreaming to it.¹³ The conceptual framework is notable for the explicit discussion of power relationships between women and men and their reproduction through constructions of gender:

Gender is not only a socially constructed definition of women and men, it is a socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes. This construction contains an *unequal power relationship with male domination and female subordination in most spheres of life* ... the male norm is taken as the norm for society as a whole, which is reflected in policies and structures. Policies and structures often unintentionally reproduce gender inequality. (CoE, 1998, p. 8, my emphasis)

This analysis leads the authors to the conclusion that gender equality 'implies calling into question the domination of ways of life, thinking and interests associated with men and the way in which our societal structures reproduce this norm' (CoE, 1998, p. 8). Gender mainstreaming is proposed as the favourable strategy for achieving this aim on the basis that:

As imbalances between women and men continue to influence all walks of life, it is becoming increasingly clear that new approaches, new strategies and new methods are needed to reach the goal of gender equality. The issue of gender equality needs to be addressed at a higher, i.e. more structural, and broader level and it should include a wider

¹² CoE, 1998, p. 5

¹³ For a fuller discussion of the frame alignment strategies used by the Group to secure the support of its various target audiences, see Verloo, 1998.

range of actors. 'Gender mainstreaming' appears now as one of these strategies' (CoE, 1998, p. 12).

The report of the Group of Specialists thus developed and promoted a version of mainstreaming which combined reassurances to 'mainstream' policy actors with a feminist analysis of gender equality. The influence of this report on the development of a mainstreaming strategy in Scotland is discussed in chapter five.

On 7 October 1998, the Committee of Ministers, having taken note of the Group of Specialists' report, adopted Recommendation No R (98) 14 to member States on gender mainstreaming. The adoption of this recommendation demonstrated a political consensus among the member States regarding the usefulness of gender mainstreaming. The Committee states 'development of the gender mainstreaming strategy is considered instrumental in achieving real equality and partnership of women and men in both the private and the public spheres.'¹⁴

Explaining success

Through the membership of both EU institutions and the Council of Europe mainstreaming has spread to many member states, regional and local structures of governance. Statements of commitment to mainstreaming as a concept have preceded the compilation of suggestions as to how to implement the concept, or how to move from theory to practice. Despite the work of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists this led, by the end of the 1990s, to a situation whereby many governments, as well as international and transnational organisations, had signed up to the strategy but had little idea of 'how to do it' (Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Mazey, 2000, p. 342).

Mainstreaming is interesting as an attempt to embed strategies and systems for working towards greater equality for various groups in society into the workings of government. In contrast to the 'femocrat' strategy or 'state feminism', which has been developed most significantly in the Nordic States, US, Australia, Canada (see Stetson and Mazur, 1995), and at local government level in Britain (see Halford, 1992; Edwards, 1995; Scott, 2002), mainstreaming is not (only) to be done by those personally committed and with expertise in pursuing feminist or equality strategies,

¹⁴ <http://www.humanrights.coe.int/equality/Eng/MainActivities/activities.htm>

but rather by 'those actors normally involved in the policy process' (CoE, 1998, p. 15).

As we have seen, in the years since the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, mainstreaming has been endorsed and adopted not only by European organisations and governments, but also by nearly every important international organisation (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002b, p. 340). Its position as the 'new' approach to 'engendering the state', together with this widespread popularity, has given rise to the question 'how did mainstreaming, a potentially radical and transformative strategy, get onto the agenda of so many institutions and governments?' To answer this question, academics have utilised concepts developed in the literature on Social Movement Theory and in particular the concept of framing (for a review of the application of framing in Social Movement Literature see Benford and Snow, 2000).

In its application to the analysis of social movements, framing is largely concerned with how 'collective action frames' come to be shared by activists within a social movement. The concept of frame alignment (Snow et al., 1986, and see below, p. ***) was developed to explain the processes by which SMOs were able to gain support for their activities and agendas. In the applications of framing to the analysis of mainstreaming, frame alignment has been used to explain the building of collective frames between mainstreaming proponents and government actors, rather than within the social movement itself.

Framing Mainstreaming at the European Level¹⁵

'Reframing' has been a key strategy of the second-wave women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s in determining the ways in which policies affecting women were addressed within Europe (Mazey, 1998) and has continued to be a strategy of women's networks since 1990 in strategically reframing and expanding 'the underlying policy image, from the initial focus upon 'equal pay' and 'equal treatment' to 'women's rights as fundamental human rights' (Mazey, 2000b). Analysis of the report of the Council of Europe's 'Expert Group on Gender Mainstreaming' demonstrates how frame alignment was used to gain the

¹⁵ A brief working discussion of the concept of framing is given here which is developed more fully in chapter two.

acceptance of both feminist academic and government audiences for the policy of mainstreaming (Verloo, 1998). Strategic framing has also been shown to be a central explanatory factor in the adoption and implementation of mainstreaming within five Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Union, used to make mainstreaming 'fit' or resonate with the dominant goals or frames of these DGs and the various issue-areas (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000).

In academic studies of the use of framing by mainstreaming advocates, 'framing' is primarily discussed as a strategic and intentional activity undertaken by feminist actors and directed at particular audiences. The aim of this 'strategic framing' is the adoption of a policy with potentially transformative effects (mainstreaming) by organisations whose interests may differ quite substantially from those of the actors promoting that policy. The significance accorded to the role of agency in these accounts, reflected in the reference to *strategic* framing, is tempered by the political opportunities and mobilising structures or networks present in the institutional context (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002a, 2002b; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000) and by the existence of national 'policy hinterlands' based on conflicting frames (Mazey, 1998).

The use of framing to explain the adoption and implementation of the mainstreaming strategy has also raised questions about the 'dangers', or unintended consequences of framing strategies (see Verloo, 2001; Woodward, 1999, 2001, 2003). Thus the 'integrationist frame'¹⁶ of the European Commission's mainstreaming approach is seen to be a direct result of framing by mainstreaming advocates in terms of the goals of the various DGs rather than in terms of equality per se, 'which, in all likelihood, would have been rejected by 'mainstream' EU policy-makers' (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000, p. 452). The need for frame 'resonance' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 219) with dominant cultures creates a major source of constraint. Similarly, Booth and Bennett find that the selective use of feminist theory within the EU has resulted in the recognition of 'gendered processes at structural, interpersonal and symbolic levels [but] it does not locate these in an analysis of patriarchy' (2002, p. 441). These unintended consequences affect not just how the policy is understood by a particular group of policy makers at a particular point in time, but also constrain the ways in which it will be understood in that organisation

¹⁶ A distinction between 'agenda-setting' and 'integrationist' approaches to mainstreaming was made by Jahan (1995) and has informed the use of terms 'transformatory' and 'integrationist' discussed below.

in the future; the dangers of 'rhetorical entrapment' mean that 'attention must be paid to the ways in which framing at the time of introduction of a policy will necessarily set the terms for its further development possibilities' (Verloo. 2001, p. 10). In other words, processes of frame alignment substantively, as well as symbolically, alter the policy in question.

The effect of 'rhetorical entrapment' has arguably been to turn mainstreaming from a 'transformatory' into an 'integrationist' strategy. The distinction between the two has been developed from Jahan's work relating to the development field which delineated the difference between approaches which were agenda-setting — implying the transformation and reorientation of the existing development agenda itself — and integrationist approaches that addressed gender issues within existing development policy paradigms (1995, p. 13).

The broad appeal of mainstreaming in itself has set off warning bells for those pursuing radical change. As Woodward says 'seldom has a policy with such transformatory potential been taken on with such alacrity' (2001, p. 15).

Notwithstanding the comments above, the resulting quest to explain this seeming paradox has focussed on the ability of actors to frame the policy, rather than on the implications of frame alignment for policy implementation. Little attention has been paid to whether the process of frame alignment successfully overcome differences between the different starting frames of the different actors, or whether tensions based upon these frames can be found during policy implementation. Despite flagging the dangers of framing, the role of 'frame conflict' (Schön and Rein, 1994) and the possibilities of resolving it have not been an explicit focus of attention. Further, while acknowledging the situation of frame analysis within a constructivist and discursive turn in policy analysis, the strategic use of framing has been emphasised over study of the ways in which possible framings are constrained by wider or dominant discourses.

Framing 'success' has been evaluated on an instrumental basis – the success of getting a policy adopted – rather than on whether the new framing has resolved frame conflict. In their study of the varied implementation of mainstreaming within the EU, Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) thus explain their findings regarding conformance to dominant values as a result of framing rather than as an indication that framing has not been successful. The finding that mainstreaming is supported by women because 'it shifts attention from equality as equal treatment to gender impact' while, on the basis that it requires policies to be assessed for adverse impact

on women *and men*, policy-makers support the same strategy 'precisely because they perceive [it] to adhere to the 'equality as equal treatment' standard' (Beveridge et al., 2000, p. 391) suggests that frame conflict has been obscured rather than resolved.

Successful instrumental framing of mainstreaming by feminist advocates has enabled it to appeal to a wide range of actors and interests. It has also remained a rather 'vague' strategy, one that 'lacks in specification' (Booth and Bennett, 2002; Verloo, 2001; Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Woodward, 2001, 2003). It is intuitive that this ambiguity aids the framing process, and it has enabled organisations to adapt mainstreaming to their institutional cultures (Woodward, 2003). It also works to obscure where mainstreaming may conflict with institutional cultures, as instances of frame conflict may be hidden in the abstract vagueness of theoretical definitions (Schön and Rein, 1994). Such conflict, Schön and Rein argue, becomes apparent as ambiguities are lessened during the practice of implementation. We would thus expect that, as the wide definitional space left by the ambiguities of the mainstreaming strategy and by its multiple framings is narrowed during implementation, frame conflict may re-emerge.

At base, the need for frame alignment, and the possibility of frame conflict, arise from the fact that mainstreaming is an attempt to engender the state, to embed a gender or equality analysis within an organisational structure which, arguably, has been designed with white, middle class men in mind.¹⁷ To do this, it suggests using the tools of formal rationality to pursue the irrational goal of gender transformation (Woodward, 1999, 2001, 2003), and thus reignites discussion of the risks of state engagement for feminism (and other social movements) in the form of cooption, dilution and assimilation, and of the difficulties of speaking (feminist) truth to power (Woodward, 1999, 2001).

These dangers are balanced against the potential of mainstreaming, as Woodward says 'if femocrats, academics and experts in coalition with the women's movement succeed in helping officials to better see the 'Truth' of gender through using the positive aspects of rationality, strategically speaking it may have been worth it' (2001, p. 29). In addition, while mainstreaming has so far been adopted in an integrationist rather than transformatory manner, there is the possibility that

¹⁷ A discussion of the gendering of organisation is given in chapter seven.

integrationist change may lead to transformative change – that introducing gender will create an ‘aha’ effect (Woodard, 2003, p. 83) which in turn transforms ways of seeing and doing.¹⁸ Frame resolution may stem from the practice of using awareness-raising tools (disaggregated statistics, gender impact assessments), enabling policy makers to ‘see’ differently.

Mainstreaming in the Frame

Framing is employed not only by proponents of mainstreaming seeking its adoption by government bodies, but also, and necessarily, in academic accounts of the strategy.¹⁹ The identification of previous approaches to equality as problematic and the posing of mainstreaming as a new and better strategy is itself a process of framing (Verloo, 1998, p. 7; 2001, p. 6) in which mainstreaming can be understood as part of a wider discourse of third ways which attempt to propose a solution to two previously conflicting approaches. Within this framework, “a third way automatically positions itself as a more objective account of social conditions than the (first and second) partial views it claims to transcend” (Bastow and Martin, 2003, p. 6).²⁰

The relationship between mainstreaming and previous equality approaches is addressed in nearly all the literature on mainstreaming and different analogies and metaphors have been employed in its framing.²¹ Thus, Rees (1998) sees mainstreaming as a transformative strategy, which builds upon two previous approaches: the ‘tinkering’ or ‘equal treatment perspective’, which aims at policies and legislation which treat women the ‘same as’ men and do not discriminate against them on the basis of their difference to men, and the ‘tailoring’ or ‘women’s perspective’, which utilises positive action measures aimed at women, such as assertiveness training, to try and create a more level playing field. To extend the playing field analogy, the ‘transformative’ strategy of mainstreaming aims to go a

¹⁸ The idea of creating an ‘aha’ effect also informed the preparation of a guide to MSPs on mainstreaming in Scotland, which encouraged ‘asking new questions, hearing unexpected answers’ (F. Mackay and K. Bilton (2000) *Questions of Mainstreaming: Examining policy and legislative proposals within an equalities framework*, Guidance notes for MSPs prepared on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality).

¹⁹ For a useful review of current debates in gender and equality mainstreaming literature see Walby (undated).

²⁰ With clear similarities to the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

²¹ The parallels with the description of the strategies for engendering development discussed earlier should be clear.

step further by changing the basis on which players compete (the language of competition is obviously problematic for a strategy which aims to challenge gender norms). Nelen and Hondelghem (2000) have used the metaphor of the 'Gender Equality House' in which equal treatment and positive action programmes form the first two storeys, and mainstreaming the penthouse (cited in Woodward, 2001, p. 6).

An insufficiently sophisticated understanding of this relationship has been blamed for continuing confusion over the meaning of mainstreaming (Booth and Bennett, 2002). The bone of contention here is whether mainstreaming is portrayed as the third stage in a temporally distinct development of approaches to equality, or whether it should be conceived as constituted by all three approaches. I am not convinced that Booth and Bennett's criticism of previous work as sticking to a discrete conceptualisation is correct, but it is certainly true that in some instances of practice mainstreaming has been understood not to include practices of positive action associated with the 'women's perspective'. Booth and Bennett (2002, p. 432) have used the image of a three-legged stool to explain their vision of mainstreaming as *necessarily* incorporating all three approaches. In their model, the 'legs' of the stool are the 'equal treatment', 'women's' and 'gender' perspectives, and mainstreaming is the seat that rests upon all three approaches. In using this image, they also wish to challenge the compartmentalism of previous definitions, which they believe has led to confusion over the meaning of mainstreaming, in which it is equated, wrongly, with only the last stage.

In practice, the identification of mainstreaming with the third stage exclusively *has* been damaging where positive action strategies are seen as no longer warranted, leading to the withdrawal of specific equality / gender initiatives and structures.²² Theoretically, however, most advocates have stressed the compatibility and continuing importance of all three stages, whether they define mainstreaming as the last or all three.²³ Rees for example, views the equal treatment perspective as an

²² A recent statement of the FDP (German Liberal Party) for the Local Elections in North Rhine Westphalia on 22 May 2005 explained that while gender mainstreaming cannot completely replace women's policy work, it will do in occupational policy. Consequently, regional 'women and career' offices and equal opportunities commissioners will be abolished under the principle of gender equality. http://www.nrw-braucht-tempo.de/webcom/show_themensammlung.php/c-516/nr-255/i.html

²³ Though in Mazey's earlier writing on mainstreaming she states that (1998, p. 149) '[mainstreaming] involves the *replacement of specific initiatives for women* by the integration of a gender dimension into other EC economic and structural policies on the grounds that equal opportunities (just like environmental policy) are no longer a marginal question, but central to all aspects of EC policy—making' (Emphasis added), she later stresses that 'gender mainstreaming is intended to complement, not replace existing equal treatment legislation' (Mazey, 2002, p. 231).

essential part of any equal opportunities policy (1998, p. 32) and also sees the continuing importance of the women's perspective (1999, p. 166). It is important that some governments have seen in mainstreaming a chance to roll-back previous work on equality by claiming that it is now 'mainstreamed' throughout the system (Verloo, 1999, p. 4), or to disband positive action programmes (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2000, p. 452).²⁴ In response, the political importance of retaining specific structures and initiatives has been demonstrated by feminists who are wary of mainstreaming being used as a way of scaling down commitments to equality (Verloo, 2001, p. 8; Woodward, 2001, p. 4). Both the UN and the EU (major promoters and disseminators of mainstreaming) as well as key academic texts and reports on mainstreaming have stressed that it must be a 'dual' or 'twin' strategy, combining both general and specific measures and practices (Verloo, 1999, p. 6). In these conceptualisations, mainstreaming is still seen as a separate strategy, but positive action is required in addition to mainstreaming in order to address specific instances of inequality and discrimination resulting from particular practices. That mainstreaming has been used to cut back on specific equality work may then be due more to resistance than to real conceptual confusion though tightening conceptual understanding may still be useful in reducing the possibilities for resistance disguised as misunderstanding.

The three different strategies for gender equality – equal treatment, positive action and gender mainstreaming – parallel three theoretical approaches to equality which have been used to categorise different stages of the feminist movement: equality as sameness, difference and diversity, or to use Squires' (1999) terminology, inclusion, reversal and displacement. This theoretical classification fits the 'third way' discourse discussed above where the strategy of diversity or reversal is seen to explode the basis for the opposition between the former two approaches. Thus mainstreaming has been framed as resolving many of the tensions inherent within the sameness/ difference debate (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002, p. 60): in common with the strategies of displacement and diversity, mainstreaming aligns itself neither with sameness nor with difference, but rather is defined by a 'commitment to deconstructing the division itself' (Squires, undated, p. 14). Thus, Squires argues 'Mainstreaming takes us beyond the classic opposition between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome, as embodied in equal treatment

²⁴ It was this experience of 'mainstreaming' at local government level in the UK (which was often used to disband women's or equal opportunities committees) that caused the scepticism of many UK feminists to the strategy.

and positive action, by focusing on the structural reproduction of gender inequality and aiming to transform the policy process such that gender bias is eliminated.’ (Squires, undated, p. 17).

We have seen above that the failures of previous approaches have been important to the presentation of mainstreaming as the solution to the problem of how to advance equality, while, at the same time, these previous approaches are still regarded as informing and complementing the mainstreaming strategy. This apparent tension or contradiction is removed if we accept that it is the limitations of these previous approaches which is criticised, not the approaches per se — the problem is that they do not go far enough. If, however, the objection to equal treatment and positive action approaches is that they treat men as the norm (equality being granted on the basis of women being either the same as, or different to men) then their compatibility with an approach which aims to deconstruct this norm is more problematic; Squires suggests that ‘to be coherent as well as comprehensive such an agenda will need to identify where these three models clash, and to work through the problems that emerge when they do.’ (Squires, 2003, no page). It can be considered a ‘success’ of the framing of mainstreaming that the tensions inherent in the theoretical underpinning of the ‘twin-track’ approach have not received wider attention.

Where does this discussion leave my opening definition of mainstreaming? Firstly, the ‘newness’ that I claimed for the mainstreaming approach is as much a strategic frame as a reality (Verloo, 2001), as the history of mainstreaming in the fields of development, the environment and education testifies.²⁵ Secondly, we can understand the reference to creating better and more efficient policy, as well as the reference to the ‘often unintentional’ nature of actions resulting in discrimination, as frame bridging to policy makers. Thirdly, we have seen that the transformative potential of mainstreaming is simply that – a potential, and not a certainty, and lastly, we have questioned the extent to which mainstreaming does actually resolve the ‘sameness/ equality’ debate by demonstrating the continuing importance of previous theoretical approaches and the unresolved tension between these and a strategy of displacement.

²⁵ Gender Mainstreaming has a longer history in the Nordic countries — in Norway the approach was adopted in the mid—1980s.

Having considered the framing of mainstreaming within academic writing and at the international level, we turn now to explore in more depth the concept of framing as an analytical approach before asking, in chapter three, what impact the particular climate of UK politics has had on how mainstreaming has been framed at this level.

2

Understanding Mainstreaming as Framing: methodology and method

Focussing on issues of methodology and method, this chapter sets out the questions that have informed the research, discusses the rationale for a discursive and feminist approach to the study of mainstreaming, explores the key analytic concept of framing and finally provides an account of the methods of analysis used.

The thesis considers the potential for mainstreaming to make bureaucracy 'less oppressively gendered' (Britton, 2000) in Scotland. Specifically, it asks

- What has informed the Executive's version of mainstreaming? What has been the impact of context, especially devolution, and involvement of women/women's organisations? How does the Executive's *Equality Strategy* reframe previous versions of mainstreaming?
- What does mainstreaming tell us about the policy-making processes of the Scottish Executive, and about the culture of the organisation more generally?
- How far is mainstreaming in tension with, or compatible with, the policy making process and the culture of the Scottish Executive?
- What are the challenges faced by those implementing mainstreaming within the Executive?
- What are the implications of the above for the development of mainstreaming in Scotland in terms of a participatory-democratic versus technocratic distinction?

While the approach is that of a case study, further explication of the strategy and the consideration of factors which have facilitated or hindered its adoption and

development are supplementary rather than core foci of my analysis. I have, instead, been interested in how mainstreaming has been experienced and perceived by those closely involved in its development and implementation and in exploring the tensions that have arisen between the demands of mainstreaming and the demands and norms of policy making more generally. These tensions are often generic to acting in the policy process in any area, though they also have particular implications stemming from the specific policy. In this way, while my study is a very small and localised one, it has relevance for thinking about generic issues of policy making.

Feminist Policy Analysis

Following a feminist policy analysis approach means paying attention to issues of gender, and requires an interest in doing applied work to investigate normative theory driven by an interest in gender (Mazur, 2002). Mazur categorises feminist analyses of the state into four approaches: feminist policy formation, feminist movements and policy work, state feminism and gender and state welfare (Mazur, 2002). Of feminist policy formation she states that its major object of analysis is the policy process itself, or the 'politics of policy formation'. The second approach considers the interplay between women's movements, the state and policy making, and is concerned with, among other things, the use of 'framing' by movements. State feminism is concerned with women's policy machinery and the role of women actors in the state as policy makers (sometimes referred to as 'femocrats'). The last approach considers the impact of non-feminist policies on women as compared to men.

The study of mainstreaming is concerned with all four areas of Feminist Policy Analysis. As discussed further below, mainstreaming is a policy *about policy making*. As developed in Scotland it has been a site of interplay between women and the state, both in policy design, and through attempts to increase participation and communication during policy implementation. In other cases (Verloo, 1998, 2001; Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002a, 2002b; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000; Mazey, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002) framing is shown to be a central factor in such interplay. Mainstreaming affects both the position of and the understanding of the need for women (and men) with gender and equality expertise in the policy process. It is based upon, and promotes, analyses of the gendered impact of 'mainstream' policy.

In some renderings there is a striking parallel between the aims of feminist policy analysis and those of mainstreaming. Pascall writes '[f]eminist analysis is about putting women into a picture that has largely been drawn by men. But it is also about rethinking and, in the end, about drawing a new picture that includes women and men. ... Thus a feminist critique does more than reinsert women into an existing framework; it poses a fundamental challenge of academic orthodoxies' (Pascall, 1997, p. 10).

The problem of mainstreaming gender into public policy is replicated at the level of policy analysis. This thesis is concerned both with studying how gender is being mainstreamed into policy work, and with mainstreaming gender into the study of policy. Bringing a feminist policy approach to the subject is a way of recognising that while I am interested in the light that mainstreaming throws upon questions of policy implementation, I wish then to turn this light back on questions of gender, and ask what this implies for the strategies of equality advocates, and for the chances of achieving change through mainstreaming. Combining ideas from 'mainstream' policy analysis with those developed by feminist policy analysts alerts us to the tensions between mainstreaming and policy making as it happens within the Scottish Executive.

A discursive approach to mainstreaming

The construction of a mainstreaming strategy is a discursive activity. In Scotland, the strategy has been shaped through the circulation of texts that have explored and attempted to define mainstreaming, between organisations, individuals and the government in Scotland in a consultative process, and through the exchange of ideas and views between key mainstreaming actors. It has been reshaped through discursive interactions during implementation. The importance of language and the discursive opportunities for shaping or 'framing' the mainstreaming strategy have been noted in other cases (Verloo 1998, 1999, 2001, 2005 forthcoming; Woodward 1999, 2001, 2003), and the concept of framing is returned to below as a key analytic tool for understanding mainstreaming. The development of mainstreaming in a particular setting will involve more than the imitation, or even interpretation, of policies developed elsewhere. It will also involve the translation of these strategies to 'fit' with existing political and cultural contexts and constraints. Such translation is discursively constituted; it is formed and informed by dominant ideas and ways of doing things.

The representation of policy problems and the construction of policy are situated within, and are part of, differing and competing understandings of the world and society. The opportunities and possibilities for formulating and successfully establishing different representations are structured by these discursive contexts. Unequal power relations afford some actors more openings than others, and the discursive structure is itself unequal; not all attempts to assign particular meaning to a policy problem will be successful.

Following Bacchi (1996, 1999), Yanow (1996, 2000), Stone (1997) and Fischer (2003) I suggest that policy making is not something that can be understood through the employment of positivist methodologies. Similarly, the problems which public policies attempt to address cannot be found in some pre-existent state in the 'real world' but rather are constructed through our various interpretations. The representation of a policy problem is crucial to the way it will be addressed, and to determining the solutions proposed (Bacchi, 1999). Mainstreaming has been proposed as the solution to, amongst others, problems of gender inequality, ineffective policy, democratic deficit and the underutilisation of human resources. Within each problem representation, attributions of blame and responsibility are a further source of variation. These different formulations of problem representations imply contrasting ideological and political standpoints. The contexts, actors and institutions which inform the construction of the Executive's policy on mainstreaming are important, as they have influenced the interpretation of the strategy and of the problems it aims to address. Viewing policy and problems as constructed and negotiated shifts attention to the political and contested nature of policy making and away from understandings of policy making as a purely technocratic process.

Interest in the role of discourse in structuring, producing and mediating meaning underlies discourse-analysis-informed approaches to policy analysis, or 'discursive policy inquiry' (Fischer, 2003). Common to such approaches is an understanding of language as shaping rather than simply mirroring the world (following Fischer and Forester, 1993), an attention to 'the ways in which policy argumentation is influenced or shaped by the languages of the different kinds of discourses within which they are framed' (Fischer, 2003, p. 41) and the understanding that 'given that the languages of politics inscribe the meanings of a policy problem, public policy is

not only expressed in words, it is literally 'constructed' through the language(s) in which it is described' (2003, p. 41).²⁶

A discursive approach is particularly relevant to the study of mainstreaming equal opportunities for the following reasons. It is a policy about policy making which aims to achieve real change through the transformation of cultures and ways of thinking and knowing. It deconstructs the traditional subject of much 'universal' policy and shows this to be symbolically white, male, middle-class, able-bodied and heterosexual. In important ways, the policy of mainstreaming works at a discursive level; at the same time, it is concerned with the (re)production of inequality and its very material repercussions. The policy of mainstreaming may be 'constructed through language', our understanding of the 'problems' of inequality a product of different representations, but inequalities are actually and bodily experienced. Thus a discursive approach to the study of mainstreaming must allow for the identification of 'real' problems and for moral judgements about them; it is not relativist. I do not attempt here to answer the problematic relationship between social construction and assertions of 'reality' which such approaches raise for feminists and others, though I return to this theme in chapter seven.

Following Fairclough (1992, p. 91) I see the discursive construction of society as emanating 'from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures': discourse is both shaped and constrained by social structure while at the same time being socially constitutive. It contributes to the constitution of the dimensions of social structure, which in turn, shape and constrain it. There is a dialectical relationship both between discourse and social structure and between social practice and social structure. Discursive contributions to the constitution of society can be both conservative — reproducing existing structures, and innovative — transforming existing structures.

A second qualification is necessary with regard to the use of a discursive policy analysis, since it 'rekindles the classical debates in social science and philosophy about the nature and origins of social structure and human agency' (Fischer, 2003, p. 46). In the most structuralist interpretations, discourse and meaning are seen as inseparable and discourse as strongly driving subjectivity, allowing little if any room for agency. At the other end, the subject has been portrayed as a politically

²⁶ Discursive policy inquiry shares/incorporates insights from new—institutionalism, seeing institutions as sites in which (hegemonic) discourses are embedded.

conscious language user able to use discourse to further its own ends (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000). For feminists, the implications of the discursive turn for this debate are significant. On the one hand, the concept of agency is necessary to justify claims to equal rights of access to the control of the structures which govern our lives. With respect to women, retaining the concept of agency has also been important in challenging views of women (by women and men) as helpless victims.²⁷ On the other hand, to talk about agency without recognising the existence of structures can also lead to dangerous conclusions; the existence of real material barriers to fulfilling self-development — structures of discrimination and oppression — need to be recognised. As Lister says '[p]eople can be, at the same time, both the subordinate objects of hierarchical power relations *and* subjects who are agents in their own lives, capable of exercising power in the generative sense' (1997). Various authors have sought an intermediary position between discourse as an infinitely malleable variable that can be used to produce any desirable outcome and suggestions that there is little scope to manipulate the discourse of strategy (for example, Fairclough, 1992; Hardy et al, 2000). Applications of discursive approaches to mainstreaming have tended to emphasise the agency of strategic feminist actors in framing the policy of mainstreaming to ensure its adoption by target organisations (see for example, Verloo, 1998; Mazey, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000; Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002a, 2002b). While the dangers of becoming trapped in the frames thus established has been recognised (for example, Verloo, 2001; Woodward, 1999, 2001, 2003), less attention has been paid to the way in which existing dominant discourses structure the possibilities for framing in the first place.

Framing

The concept of framing has appeared in the above discussion without significant explanation: it merits further investigation. Framing is a discursive practice, it is a process by which we understand or make sense of our world. A frame is commonly understood as a particular and partial way of seeing something, as a set of contexts which suggest one interpretation over another. Frames enable us to process and interpret what would otherwise be an overwhelming array of visual (and

²⁷ Also raises complex questions about the validity of claims that e.g. women working as prostitutes are oppressed when some of these women assert that this is not the case and that they 'chose' to take up this work.

discursive) cues (Minsky, 1988). It is a 'way of selecting, organising, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, predicting and acting' (Rein and Schön, 1993, p. 146). Framing is therefore a significant process through which societies reproduce meaning (Goffman, 1974).

The concept of framing has been developed in several fields within the social sciences but has received most attention in the field of sociology where it was introduced by Goffman in his 1974 book 'Frame Analysis'. Goffman's use of the concept has been extended and adapted to illuminate processes of Social Movement Organisation (SMO) and in particular, how social movements gain support for, and participation in, their activities and campaigns (Snow et al., 1986). The concept of frame alignment was developed to explain the processes by which SMOs were able to gain support for their activities and agendas.

The term *frame alignment* was coined to refer to 'the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary.' (Snow et al., 1986, p. 464). Frame alignment was then broken down into four separate processes: frame bridging; frame amplification; frame extension; and frame transformation. 'Frame bridging' refers to 'the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue of problem.' (Snow et al, 1986, p. 467). 'Frame amplification' refers to 'the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events.' (Snow et al., 1986, p. 469). Frame extension occurs when an SMO needs to 'extend the boundaries of its primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents.' (Snow et al., 1986, p. 472). Lastly, 'frame transformation' the most radical of the four processes, occurs when 'activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful from the standpoint of some primary framework, [are redefined] in terms of another framework.' (Snow et al., 1986, p. 474).

Current work on framing also draws upon the writing of Vickers (1965) on 'appreciative systems' or the 'net of communication' within which we make judgements and decisions (p. 15). Appreciative systems constitute a 'set of readiesses to distinguish some aspects of the situation rather than others and to classify and value these in this way rather than in that' (p. 67). As with frames, appreciative systems enable us to act in the world, without them 'we could not

responds to *anything* in *any* way' (p. 68). Yet, at the same time, they are also limiting 'creat[ing] an un-readiness to see, to value and to respond in ways inconsistent with those patterns' (p. 68).

Frame analysis is situated within a constructivist approach towards reality such that '[f]rame analysis is concerned with the negotiation and (re)construction of reality by social/political actors through the use of symbolic tools.' (Triandafyllidou and Fotiou, 1998, section 1.1). It thus implies 'agency and contention at the level of reality construction' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614), but also recognises that cultural contexts place constraints on social movement framing activity (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 622). A major source of such constraint is caused by the need for frame 'resonance' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 219) with dominant cultures.²⁸

The janus-faced character of appreciative systems is thus also understood to be a component of frames. While they enable us to interpret and act in the world, existing frames also constrain the development of new ones. This constraining nature of 'extant frames' (Ross, 2000) is what Verloo refers to with her term 'rhetorical entrapment' (Verloo, 2001). For Vickers, 'changes which shake this conceptual system are resisted with vehemence proportionate to the extent of the threat' (1965, p. 68). Yet the constraints created by extant frames are not total; there is, necessarily, the potential to create new frames, not least in order to interpret experiences that do not fit with existing frames (Minsky, 1998, p. 245).

The concept of 'strategic framing', based on the possibility of creating new frames is used to describe the process by which actors may frame issues in a particular way in order to increase the likelihood of their acceptance. Again, there are similarities with Vickers, 'each disputant [in a political debate] can only expose to the others those aspects of the proposal which he thinks most likely to bring the other's appreciative settings into line with his own' (1965, p. 71). Such strategic framing can be achieved at two levels, the instrumental and the sense-making.

As a sense-making activity, framing is concerned with the process of creating new meaning, rather than simply disguising conflict, as may be the result of instrumental framing. Schön's work on the importance of generative metaphors in social policy (1979) in enabling the process of 'carrying over' of frames or perspectives from one domain to another' (p. 254) is concerned with the

²⁸ This is a key concept for my analysis and receives further discussion in chapters two and three.

sense-making level. Schön's emphasis is less on the usefulness of frames than on the problems presented by the existence of 'frame conflict'. The solution to such conflict is seen to lie in a process of inquiry into the underlying frames which, if successful, results in 'frame restructuring' (p. 256). Significantly, frame restructuring is differentiated from processes of mapping, fusing and compromise (p. 279). Rather, elements of existing frames are transformed in restructuring so that they are no longer in conflict; it is a 'very different kind of process' from 'simply leaving out of account values which in an earlier formulation entered into conflict' (1979, p. 274). If we take seriously the argument above that policy is literally constructed through language, then it follows that the production of new policy frames will reconstruct, rather than merely re-present, policy.

To illustrate these points with an analogy, in the world of art, the choice of picture frame for a work is based on the belief that finding the right frame may enable the viewer to see it in a certain and desired way. Further, it is recognised that decisions about where and how to hang the work are very significant; it is understood that the physical space in which it is hung and the context in which it is placed will 'frame' how the work is understood. Placing the work in a different frame, or 'reframing' it, either within a new picture frame, or in a new space, will change how it is viewed; it may 'bring out' different aspects of the work, changing the viewer's perception of what is most significant. In this way, reframing changes the work itself. Though theoretically bounded only by the limits of frame manufacture, or access to hanging spaces, the choice of frame for the work is constrained by ideas and values about what constitutes an acceptable frame; what is considered acceptable will depend on the audience addressed. The frames which we apply will both be affected by and influence our context in terms of both our 'behavioural world' and the institutional setting (Schön and Rein, 1994), or, as Bacchi says, 'feminist interventions will be shaped by context. Both political climate and specific cultural and institutional factors will affect the opportunity or lack of opportunity for discursive reframing' (1999, p. 205). Once 'seen' in one frame, it may be more difficult to successfully reframe the work in another. Transgressing the boundaries or expectations regarding framing may create a sense of discomfort or dissonance.

Schön's approach to the study of framing and generative metaphor is prompted by his attention to the importance of 'problem-setting' rather than 'problem-solving' to social policy – to 'the ways in which we frame the purposes to be achieved [rather] than with the selection of optimal means of achieving them' (1979, p. 255). Thus Schön's approach has strong similarities to work on problem representation (Bacchi,

1996, 1996; Gordon, 1988) referred to above. As Ackelsberg says, 'what we "see" as a social problem and what we take that problem to be is, itself, a social construct that changes over time. Further, the definition itself may be gendered' (1992, p. 482).

Academic response to practitioner demands for information on tools and procedures for mainstreaming has meant that the issue of problem representation in mainstreaming has often been ignored. Verloo (2005 forthcoming) points to the importance of the aim of mainstreaming initiatives, or the question 'what is it that mainstreaming seeks to address?' as well as to the significance of different understandings of equality or 'gender equality frames' (Verloo, 2005 forthcoming) entailed in different problem representations. Applying a problem representation approach to the study of mainstreaming alerts us to the political rather than technical questions raised by the strategy as it is interpreted in different contexts.

While noting the similarities, Bacchi specifically distinguishes her 'What's the Problem?' approach (1999) from Schön's interpretation of 'problem-setting' as far as his focus is on the possibility of enquiring into conflicting ends entailed in different policy frames (1999, p. 29). Rejecting the assumptions of a common agenda or common culture, she is concerned less with 'making the life of the policy analyst easier' than 'with the processes by which problem representations impose constraints on social vision' (1999, p. 29). Thus her attention is to 'problematizations rather than to problems' (1999, p. 199), and to the '*implications* of competing representations' (1999, p. 200). Schön's attachment to possibilities for consensus through frame restructuring leads him to value 'win-win' outcomes. For example, in relation to one example of successful restructuring, he writes '[t]he competitive game formerly played ... gives way here to a collaborative game in which officials and settlers *both* win' (1979, p. 273). Seeing the process by which this is achieved as one in which 'individuals engage with one another in a kind of reciprocal inquiry through which they reset the problem of their problematic situation' (1979, p. 275), Schön neglects the extent to which unequal power relations between the 'individuals' in question will affect this process. In contrast, Bacchi is clearly aware of this dimension, and of its importance to the issues of problem representation within feminism itself, arguing for 'the need to apply a What's the Problem? Approach to *feminists'* analyses of what needs to change' as these will also 'reflect deeply held cultural assumptions, given specific historical, economic and cultural locations' (1999, p. 205).

Chapter one discussed how framing has been used as a tool for explaining the uptake of mainstreaming at governmental and transnational levels. It also referred to the dangers of 'rhetorical entrapment' (Verloo, 2001) which arise from the 'strategic framing' of mainstreaming. In the context of the discussion of discourse and framing above, frames are understood both as structuring how we understand our world and also as offering possibilities to exercise agency through reframing.²⁹ As stated above and in chapter one, frame resonance is a major constraining factor on framing possibilities. In the following chapters, this idea of constraint is extended in line with the understanding of discourse and discussion of framing developed above, so that I consider not just the limitations that the desire to appeal to target audiences imposes, but also the way that dominant frames actually render some framings unspeakable.

Taking these discursive constraints seriously calls into question the success of strategic framing strategies by mainstreaming advocates, as well as our understanding of framing itself. Various studies have demonstrated that mainstreaming is adapted to fit organisational cultures (Woodward, 2003, p. 67; and see Verloo, 2005 forthcoming for a review) and, as yet, there are no clear examples of a fully implemented mainstreaming strategy. The not inconsiderable success of strategic framing has been in securing the adoption of mainstreaming strategies by numerous governmental organisations. These new 'framings', however, have not necessarily resolved the conflicts between the goals of the adopting organisations and the goals of feminist mainstreaming advocates – so far, they have occurred at an instrumental rather than a sense-making level. Following Schön, I argue that resolving differences arising from conflicting frames requires constructing new understandings, not merely disguising the sources of difference. Whether such restructuring is either possible or desirable is addressed in the conclusions to this thesis. The following chapters explore the impact of discursive contexts on the framings of mainstreaming in the UK and Scotland and the evidence for continuing frame conflict, and question whether frame restructuring has taken place at a sense-making or purely instrumental level.

In exploring the issue of frame conflict, I draw upon the work of Schön and Rein (1994) and in particular the suggestion that frame conflicts become apparent in real, specific situations and are not always identifiable at an abstract level where

²⁹ As a process, reframing has similarities with Laclau and Mouffe's (1987) concept of 'articulation' as the act of combining various elements of present discourses into something new and coherent.

'vagueness is unifying and (apparent) consensus can be reached': while agreement has been possible on the principle of mainstreaming, differences are increasingly likely as the policy is solidified in practice. Studying the early stages of implementation of the policy in-depth and focussing on the experience of those directly involved on a day-to-day basis optimises access to instances of frame conflict.

Through the semi-structured interviews, and following an interpretive approach, I explore how these tensions present themselves to those working on mainstreaming, and through the analysis of documents I am able to trace the development of ideas and identify examples of 'framing' which have been important in constructing the policy as it has developed.

Implementation and the reconstruction of policy

I am treating the process of the development and application of the mainstreaming strategy within the Scottish Executive as one of implementation, aware that in some ways this may be contrary to our intuitive idea of implementation as the putting into practice 'on the ground' of policies made by and in bureaucracies.

Mainstreaming is a policy that has been developed and designed through the interaction of various bodies and institutions; the 'Scottish version' as outlined in the *Equality Strategy* is a product of these previous interactions. Unlike many other policy areas, mainstreaming is concerned more directly with process — how policy is made — than with specifying particular outcomes. While it is intended that mainstreaming will also occur in other bodies associated with the Executive, the Executive itself is the main and initial focus of activity. Thus the implementation of mainstreaming happens within the organisation that designed it, rather than in 'front line' agencies.

In this process of implementation, the policy itself may be subject to negotiation and change, thus I am approaching implementation as a political process during which policies continue to evolve (Barrett and Fudge, 1981), rather than as a rational model of objective and value-free implementation of previously decided goals. Following Majone and Wildvasky (1984, p. 116), I see implementation not as a technical point after the development of policy, but rather as part of that process: '[i]mplementation will always be evolutionary; it will inevitably reformulate as well as carry out policy'.

Throughout the thesis, mainstreaming is analysed and understood both as a process of agenda-setting and as a process of implementation. The separation between these processes imposed by rational accounts of the policy process is rejected in favour of an understanding of implementation as the reformulation of agendas; likewise, to have gender on the agenda is a result of implementation. As both agenda-setting and implementation, mainstreaming is a discursive activity. While there is much agreement on the desirability of adopting a mainstreaming approach, there is less understanding of how this approach will be put into practice (or 'how to do' mainstreaming). The level of agreement reached on the desirability of a mainstreaming approach has been possible in part due to the ability of mainstreaming to appeal to various different actors with different political aims — it offers, for instance, both to improve the efficiency of government policy and to make it more just. This flexibility has resulted in a high level of definitional space which, it is argued, eased the adoption of mainstreaming in principle but is likely to invite disputes in the move to practice. Attempts to solidify meanings in practice will be inherently conflictual: contests over the meanings of concepts are contests over political outcomes (Bacchi, 1996); they will necessarily involve the renegotiation and reformulation of the policy. A discursive approach highlights the importance of language and understanding in meaning construction during implementation and the impact of different possibilities of definition for policy development.

Viewing implementation as a process in which policies evolve and are reformulated, and recognising that different framings of policies and problems can be an indication of political contests, allow me to look at the development of the — policy of mainstreaming as a process in which tensions are worked out, and to ask who is involved in this process.

Documentary and Interview Analysis

This section introduces the methodological framework to be used in the analysis of official documents relating to the Executive's strategy of Mainstreaming Equality and of interviews with key participants and observers. It will address the following questions: why to include documentary and interview analysis as part of the study, what such analysis can provide, and how the data will be used. While analysis of documents and interviews differs in some respects they also share issues of methodology and approach. Much of the following is of therefore of relevance to

both documentary and interview sources, while some specific points are made for each.

In this discussion, the terms 'document' and 'text' will both be used. Following Jupp 'document' will be used to refer to the physical object to be studied - 'the medium on which the message is stored' - while 'text' will be used to refer to 'the message that is conveyed through the symbols which constitute writing' (1996, p. 299). The printed transcription of an interview also constitutes a document; like the tape of the interview itself, it is a medium on which the message is stored. In this case, however, the researcher has created the document for the specific purpose of the research. The printed transcription of the interview, or the tape recording itself, is the medium the researcher chooses to work with. In the following discussion, the printed version of interviews will be referred to as 'transcripts'; 'document' will be reserved for the published material under study.

Neither documentary analysis nor an interviewee's particular account can provide access to some original 'truth' about events and meanings. Both can, however, give an insight into the way events were constructed at that time and for a particular audience and reasons (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 47). The approach adopted is one of critical analysis, examining the assumptions that underpin these accounts (drawing on the concept of problem representation as discussed above) and considering what other possible aspects are concealed or ruled out within them (Jupp, 1996, p. 298).

In the following chapters, documentary and interview data are used to different effects. If the *Equality Strategy* sets out the official version of mainstreaming, and analysis of the *Strategy* and other key documents enables the tracing of framing and reframing of mainstreaming between them, then analysis of interviews provides insight into the experiences of those working on putting that strategy into practice. Thus in chapter five, documents provide the basis for an exploration of the influences of other versions of mainstreaming on the development of the Equality Strategy. In Chapter six, interviews with those closely involved in implementing mainstreaming provide the basis for a rich description of this experience. In Chapter seven, the interview data is again used as the basis of analysis. While chapter six had aimed to present the experiences of those involved as articulated in the interviews, chapter seven attempts to identify the underlying tensions to provide a second reading of those experiences.

Documents as spaces for reframing mainstreaming

The adoption of mainstreaming in Scotland occurred in a unique temporal and political context. The mobilisation of women during the campaign for devolution and the strong ties between some women who entered Scottish political institutions following devolution and wider women's networks, both academic and activist, created an unusual opportunity for academic practitioner interaction resulting in extensive opportunities for feminist academics to influence policy development (see chapter four). One main and key channel for such influence, with regard to the development of a mainstreaming strategy, was the production of documents targeted at policy audiences. These documents defined and brought together academics and policy makers, in Scotland and abroad, in an epistemic community (Haas, 1992) aiming to influence the development of mainstreaming strategies (this process is discussed in chapter five). Through the medium of the document these actors were able to convey messages, not only about how mainstreaming should be developed, but about the principles and values which should underpin it.

The mainstreaming strategy of the Scottish Executive is defined and delineated through the text of the *Equality Strategy*. But these processes of definition and delineation are given meaning not just by the text of this particular document, but also by how the concept has been constructed within other documents, and also through the possibility for the *Equality Strategy* to draw on understandings, not just of mainstreaming, but of equality, government, policy, social justice and so on, that have been developed elsewhere (both in the writing and in the reading of other texts). In this sense, the *Equality Strategy* as a document is an expression of discourse in text (Jupp, 1996, p. 300).

Text, as expressed in documents, not only conveys information, but also creates a basis for the negotiation of that information (Brown and Duguid, 1996). Documents also create arenas for that negotiation, through their readership, authors, and other texts. The process of negotiation through relations with other texts, by means of footnotes, references and citations, and implicit reproductions/ reconstructions of parts of, or ideas within, texts has been referred to as 'intertextuality' (Allen, 2000; Genette, 1997). Through conversation with other texts, the document both draws on the framings employed in them, and reframes them. Mirroring the discussion of framing above, the intentionality and instrumentality of such processes will vary.

The analysis of documents will enhance exploration of understandings of mainstreaming in various ways. Rather than taking the documents' wording as neutral reportage, we can ask what prior assumptions and understandings they rely upon, for example what definitions of equality are employed and what this suggests for the understanding which underlies the project (the same questions are applicable to interview data). In this sense I am rejecting a positivist interpretation of documents as empirical data to be taken at face value. Rather, documents, like interviewees' accounts, will be understood as not simply reflecting but also constructing social reality through the way they construct and present events and meanings (Hastings, 1998, p. 193). Both are located within a wider social and political context, thus the factors surrounding the process of production become as important as the social context. Following this, documents will not be used to cross-check interview data, in some way trying to determine whether individuals' responses are 'right' or 'true', but rather as data in their own right, no more or less 'true' than the interview data (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 47).

In the construction of events or meanings, certain interpretations or instances may be emphasised. Similarly, others may be downplayed or excluded. Documents and interviewee accounts are, therefore, as interesting for what they leave out as for what they contain (May, 1993, p. 138). A critical-analytic stance would consider how texts represent the events they describe, how they close off contrary interpretations by the reader and the ways in which the text attempts to stamp its authority upon the social world it describes (May, 1993, p. 138). Analysis thus requires the researcher to be aware of other possible interpretations or presentations. In particular this issue will be approached by considering how the framings employed vary between the documents, what each draws upon and enhances, and what is not reframed.

Analytical approach

The analysis of documents is informed by ideas drawn from qualitative content analysis, semiotics, and Hastings' (1998) discursive approach to policy analysis. I have not strictly applied any of these as a method of analysis, but have rather taken and combined particular insights from each. From qualitative content analysis I have noted the importance of processes of text production and the social context in which texts are created, in addition to the direction that, through a process of deconstruction, interpretation and reconstruction, the analyst should consider the

text within this wider social and political context. I also view the author as a self-conscious actor addressing an audience under particular circumstances and consider myself as researcher as an involved observer bringing my own frame of meaning (May, 1993, p. 147).

From semiotics I have borrowed the idea of documents as systems of conventional signs and modes of representation, and particularly the emphasis on the 'need to take account of the *form* of textual materials, the distinctive uses of language they may display, the relationships between texts and the conventions of genre' (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 48). The language used in official documents tends to differ from everyday language use, a device which is used to construct the distinctive and special mode of documentary representation (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 49). Further, the layout of a document, its physical appearance, can be important in determining how the document is read. The use of lists and bullet points in official documents serve practical functions in organising material; at the same time they mark some things out as particularly significant and suggest an implicit idea of order and importance, a sense of purpose and logic.³⁰

If authorship is seen as important, it is necessary to recognise that authorship of documents, especially official ones, is not always explicit. This is, for example, the case with the Equality Strategy. The absence of a socially recognised author can add to the facticity of official and organisational documents, their very anonymity being part of the official production of documentary reality (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 58). The absence of visible human agencies expressing 'opinions', beliefs' and so on may help to imply a reality that exists independently of any initial observer, interpreter or writer. It is therefore important to explore the implied readers of a text and its implied authors.

Hastings (1998) uses a micro level approach to documents, concentrating on aspects such as grammar and lexis, to explore how the use of language is connected to broader processes and practices such as the legitimization and reproduction of social relations or the construction of knowledge of social reality (1998, pp. 191 – 92).

³⁰ While content analysts would tend to regard the intentions of the author and the understandings of the readership as important to their analysis, some semioticians, following a post—structuralist approach, may argue that the text does not refer to anything beyond itself nor to the intentions of its author. This would mean that a semiotic approach would sit uncomfortably with an insistence on the importance of social context and the content approach discussed above. I wish to take on board the importance of form and relationship of documents (and of parts of a document to other parts) without subscribing fully to the tenets of poststructuralism.

Her approach is firmly grounded in a social constructionist epistemology which she argues has two main implications for her work. Firstly, it draws attention to the constructed nature of policy problems which are 'defined through a process of selection and construction which is dependent on societal processes' (Hastings, 1998, p. 194). Secondly, she argues that the 'argumentative turn' in policy analysis 'demands analysis of the ways in which particular constructions of social problems are used for particular (political) purposes' (1998, p. 194). Carol Bacchi has also noted both these implications. Bacchi argues that an analysis of the problem, or a 'problem representation approach', can shed light on why a particular solution has been proposed (1999, p. 1), and further, that this is important because contests over the meaning of concepts are contests over political outcomes (1996, p. 1).

The approaches outlined above are supported by different theoretical positions. While all reject a positivist understanding of documentary sources, they differ in their understandings of the importance of social context, the role of the researcher, their definitions of power, and the importance of author and reader. Perhaps the main difference is between whether the text is seen as something which should be studied on its own, to be analysed 'through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships' (Foucault, 1984, p.103 cited in May, 1993, p. 139), or within the context of the social, political and economic environment in which it was created. While interested in the internal meanings of the document, I also wish to consider the wider context in which it is produced. In the analysis I will therefore combine different aspects of the three approaches outlined above. Thus, in conducting analysis the documents will be read and re-read with the purpose of deconstructing and interpreting key terms and symbols, the structure and form of the document will be considered, its authorship and readership, as well as its relation to other documents and of parts of one document to other parts of the same (intertextuality). All of this will be done within a wider framework of the social and political context within which these texts have been written and produced.

The Documents

As with any analysis a process of data selection has been necessary. The *Equality Strategy* represents a key moment for the internalisation of the policy of mainstreaming by the Scottish Executive and it acts as a referent for future discussion. For these reasons it constitutes the central focus of analysis. As discussed earlier, the *Strategy* does not set out the Executive's version of

mainstreaming in a vacuum but draws upon ideas raised in consultation and through other texts. It functions within a wider social and political context, including the government's broader vision for its work and societal expectations. At one level, these influences and contexts are infinite, and drawing a boundary will always be arbitrary to some extent, however the policy community of mainstreaming is both small and deeply interconnected, and especially so within Scotland. Involvement in this community provided a good idea of the most relevant documents and this selection was confirmed by the opinions of interviewees. The analysis demonstrates the interconnections between the authors of these texts, establishing that there were multiple opportunities for the exchange of ideas, as well as tracing the connections within the texts themselves.

The report of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming has been a key agenda-setting document in the story of mainstreaming's development (see chapter one). The definition of mainstreaming developed there is widely cited and drawn upon in other mainstreaming reports. Of the documents authored outwith the UK, it has been the most influential in the development of the mainstreaming strategy in Scotland. Given its influential role in the development of mainstreaming at the European level, this document has been discussed in chapter one; in chapter five its particular influence on Scottish documents is discussed. The research report *'Mainstreaming' Equal Opportunities* (Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland, 1998) which was commissioned by the Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament (CSG), used the Group of Specialists report as a key source, and aimed to translate this report for a Scottish policy audience. The report of the CSG *Shaping Scotland's Parliament* (CSG, 1998), and in particular its 'Annex H' *Mainstreaming Equality*, mark the point at which the concept of mainstreaming entered the parlance of mainstream devolution actors. Finally, the research report *Learning from experience: lessons in mainstreaming equal opportunities* (Mackay, F. and Bilton, K., 2000), was produced both to address the question of how such a concept would be realized and to influence the way in which it was developed.

In addition to these key mainstreaming texts, analysis also includes attention to the Partnership Agreement between Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democrats *Making it work together: A programme for government* (Scottish Executive, 1999), the Minister for Communities' *Equality Statement to Parliament* (1st December 1999), The Scottish Executive's *A report on responses to the consultation paper: Towards an Equality*

Strategy, The Scottish Executive Equality Unit (2000b), and the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre's *Briefing for debate on the Equality Strategy* (SPICE, 2000).

The documents analysed are all in the public domain. Internal Scottish Executive documents relating to the Equality Strategy, including draft versions of the strategy and any notes relating to its development were requested, but these were not forthcoming. The author acknowledges that it would have been beneficial to have access to such documents, both for the analysis of the Equality Strategy itself, and in investigating the influence of the other key documents selected. Despite this, it is felt that the following selection stands on its own, providing a bounded data set allowing for the exploration of relationships and influences between these documents. In addition, access to the authors of several of the documents concerned enabled the researcher to explore the decisions made by, and influences on, actors which would not have been possible through the study of the published documents alone. At the start of the research, work on gender budgeting and mainstreaming appeared quite distinct, however, as research progressed, it has become clear that gender budgeting is now considered a central component of the Executive's mainstreaming strategy. Future research should include this area of work.

The idea behind studying the intertextuality of documents is that texts make sense because they have relationships with other texts. Just as documents are not written in isolation from the wider social and political context, nor are they written without being informed and structured by previous texts.³¹ In analysing the documents relating to the *Equality Strategy* the relationship with other documents is clear, and often referenced. There are some connections, however, which may not be made explicit. For example, one of the chapter headings used to structure the *Equality Strategy* is the same as that used in the analysis of responses to the consultation on the development of the strategy. This could be read as an intention to demonstrate that the responses to the consultation are being fed into the strategy development. In order to study issues of intertextuality, close reading of the documents aims to pick out the implicit as well as the explicit references.

³¹ This is not to neglect the extent to which documents are sometimes strikingly uninformed by previous texts.

Method – documents

Guiding all parts and stages of the analysis will be a concern to unpick and deconstruct understandings of equality and mainstreaming in the texts. Equality is obviously a key and central term in any Equality strategy, yet there are many interpretations of equality and each will have different implications. It is therefore important to consider the understandings of equality contained in original official documents, and to consider in what ways they may shape or constrain the conceptualisations which are now developed.

Analysis of documents began with a micro-level analysis of the *Equality Strategy* itself. A summary of the document was prepared concentrating on two levels – the document's structure and appearance, and its content or substance. Multiple readings of the document then produced four key codes: vision, problems, solutions and rationale, which were identified as key elements of the document's narrative. Following Hastings (1998), this stage concentrated on the introductory sections: the foreword and first two chapters. A particularly close reading of these sections aimed to identify contradictions within the text and to suggest possible alternative narratives, focussing on the construction of the policy problem.

Analysis was then widened to include the other key texts identified. Firstly, the connections between the authors of the selected documents were explored. Opportunities for the exchange of ideas between these authors were established by describing the networks in which they were involved. Analysis thus involved establishing, for each author, the networks they were involved in, the seminars and conferences they had attended, and other mainstreaming connections they had. Where possible, this information was elicited during interviews with individuals asked to comment on their own involvement and that of others. Existing accounts of the involvement of women in devolution, attendee lists of conferences and seminars as well as seminar and conference papers were also useful sources of information, as was the researchers involvement in some of these networks. In addition, organisational and individual web-pages were searched for information on membership of organisations and interests. To aid the analysis, the connections between the authors were shown in the form of a diagram (figure 2, page 134).

Having established the opportunities for interaction between the authors of the documents under study analysis shifted to an analysis based on the text of the documents themselves. The focus of this analysis was on identifying the extent of

continuity or change between the documents and exploring the use of framing processes within the documents. The documents were read for the occurrence of key themes and terminology, in particular concentrating on references to equality, democracy and participation and on references to or indications of key influences from the context in which each document was written.

Analysis also focussed on the ways in which authors attempted to appeal to different sections of their readership, and specifically, on how they combined or balanced the need to appeal both to governmental and equality (specifically feminist) actors. This aspect of analysis in particular was aided by the identification of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames used in the documents (Snow and Benford, 1998; Benford and Snow, 2000). By identifying the problem to be addressed, proposing a solution and strategies to arrive at it, and providing a motivation for action, these 'core tasks' of framing construct the mainstreaming strategy in particular ways. Particular attention was paid, therefore, to the sections of the documents concerned with definition and exposition of the mainstreaming strategy, discussion of the problem it aimed to address, and justification for action. The Equality Strategy was then re-read in the light of the analysis of the other documents, again with the aim of identifying significant influences on the Strategy, similarities and divergences in the interpretation of key concepts, and how the different interests of governmental and feminist audiences are balanced.

Method—interviews

Twenty-five interviews were conducted during the course of research during two phases, the first in January and February 2002, the second in November and December 2003. There were two main categories of interviewees. The first category included those working on mainstreaming within the Executive, either within the Equality Unit or in the pilot areas. Eighteen interviews were conducted with thirteen individuals in this group (five individuals were interviewed in both rounds of interviews). The second category of interviewees included those who had been involved in informing the development of the mainstreaming strategy, either directly or through involvement in constitutional change. Seven interviews were conducted with this group. The first block of interviews conducted in January and February 2002 only included members of the first category (those working on mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive). During the second block of interviews in November and December 2003 follow up interviews were conducted

with those who had been working in the Equality Unit at the time of the first interviews (whether they were still in the Unit or had since moved) and with the individuals who now had responsibility for mainstreaming in the pilot areas. Of the six individuals who had been in the Equality Unit at the time the first interviews were conducted two were still in the Unit at the time of the second interviews. Of the remaining four, three now worked elsewhere in the Executive, and one in an Executive agency. Only one of these had any significant involvement with equalities issues. The second block of interviews also included the second category of interviewees (those who had been involved in informing the development of the strategy prior to devolution). Had time permitted, the case studies of the pilot projects in health and education might have been fuller, including interviews with external experts in those fields.

As noted in the introduction, this thesis argues for an analysis of mainstreaming which is located in the day-to-day interaction of policy makers involved in the implementation of mainstreaming. This objective informed the criteria for selecting interviewees. The aim of the interview selection was to include those who had direct contact with mainstreaming as a significant element of their jobs within the Executive. Those for whom mainstreaming was not an explicit part of their remit were not selected.

The Scottish Executive is committed to a mainstreaming approach throughout the organisation. However, the Equality Strategy stated that a strategic approach to its development would be taken, focussed initially in two pilot areas: within housing, and within education. Where other parts of the office contacted the Equality Unit about work in equalities, the Unit would encourage them to take ownership of these issues, however this work was on a reactive basis. Therefore, while some work may have been undertaken with other parts of the office, the mainstreaming strategy was only actively promoted in the two pilots at the time the first round of interviews were held.

At this stage, the population directly involved in implementing mainstreaming was small. It included staff in the Equality Unit and individuals with responsibility for the pilot work with Housing and Education. When the first interviews were conducted in early 2002 the Equality Unit had 14 staff including administrative and secretarial support. The work of the Unit was divided into four branches concerned respectively with asylum and refugee work, disability and LGBT issues, gender and age, and race. The team leaders for each branch were interviewed as well as the

Head of Unit and the member of the Unit with responsibility for liaising with the parliamentary Equal Opportunities Committee. Through the members of the Equality Unit, contacts with responsibility for the pilots in the main divisions were identified. Interviews were then held with these individuals. An interview was conducted with the person in the Schools Group within Education Department who had responsibility for the mainstreaming pilot. Interviews were also held with a member of the Bill Team who had been involved in drafting the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2001 which had been the main focus of work in the Housing pilot, and with the line manager of that person. When the second block of interviews were conducted in November/December 2003 there were two people within housing, and two within education with responsibility for equalities work. These people were interviewed at this point.

The first interviews were used to cross-check whether the selection process had identified all essential actors in the formal organisational chart. The interviewees recognised that the development of a mainstreaming strategy was very localised. This is consistent with findings from previous research that mainstreaming, especially in its initial stages, tends to be concentrated within 'pockets' of the organisation in question (Mackay and Bilton, 2000).

Those interviewed represented a range of knowledge of, and experience in mainstreaming from the head of the Equality Unit who had been involved in this area before joining the Executive to those who had recently come into posts where mainstreaming was part of their responsibilities and had no previous experience in the area. It has already been explained why, given the subject of this research, the selection criteria did not include actors from across the office. This resulted in an interview sample which potentially could have been unrepresentative of the organisation, those interviewed being in some sense equality specialists. The Equality Unit contained three members with a background in equalities work, however, the career history of the majority of those interviewed was that of a traditional civil servant with a variety of positions held within different parts of the Executive.

The interview sample included respondents working at different grades within the office and in different roles (policy, research, management). The most significant difference in terms of an understanding of mainstreaming appeared to be whether respondents had entered the Executive from external organisations were they had had a background in equalities work. Cross-tabulation of other variables would

have been interesting, but would also have compromised the anonymity of my interviewees.

Initial contact was by phone, followed up by an email giving more information about the project. By contacting those the researcher knew first it was possible to use known names when making new contacts. All contacts were receptive to the idea of the project and willing to be interviewed. For some, however, there was a concern that either their, or the Executive's performance on mainstreaming was being tested. The intention to understand the process of implementation rather than to subject it to a comparative test was explained. For most interviewees the interview provided a welcome opportunity to reflect on what they were doing, and it was often commented that lack of such time was one of the difficulties of the job.

The needs of those interviewed for, for example, feedback and practical advice, posed potential dilemmas for the researcher. In part, interviewees were happy simply to have the chance to talk and think about the work they were doing, and to reflect on their experiences. At the same time, the pressures of the job also raised issues and needs which they hoped the research would address. At times what interviewees felt they wanted was not what the research was designed to develop. There was, for instance a pressing desire to have 'how to do it' guides. Conducting this research has meant feeling the tensions arising from obligations to the academic community, the policy community and to women as a social group.

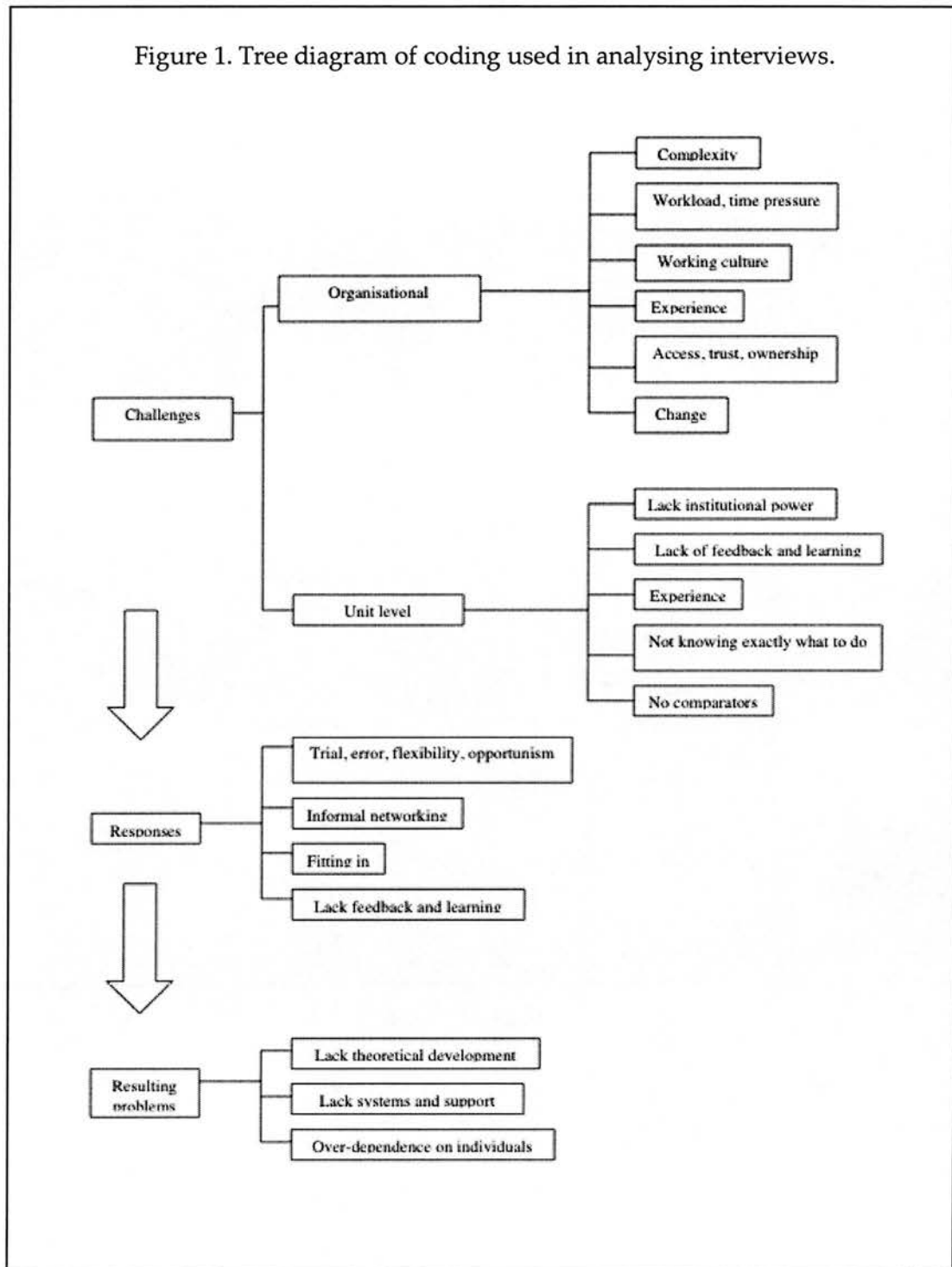
Most interviews lasted around an hour, though some were longer. A tape recorder was used for all interviews, the acceptability of this having been checked with each interviewee. Tape recordings were backed up with hand written-notes. A schedule of questions was prepared for each interview which the researcher used as a guide during the interview. This was departed from where appropriate, for example to probe further a particular issue or to allow the interviewee to raise an issue that had not been anticipated. It was agreed with all interviewees that they would not be identified personally and that they should inform me if a particular comment or piece of information was not for public use.

The researcher's previous work in the area of mainstreaming was undoubtedly helpful both in securing access to the Executive and in helping interviewees to feel relaxed talking during the interview. The researcher was seen, rightly, as a sympathetic listener and as understanding some of the difficulties which those interviewed would face. In some respects, this position created difficulties. The most

significant impact of this for the research was the decision not to take up the offer of a desk within the Equality Unit which would have made participant observation possible. In retrospect the researcher feels that this would have added useful data for the project and have been useful in terms of keeping up to date with developments. At the time, however, keen awareness of the needs of Unit staff and the pressure this could put on the research suggested that this level of involvement would be difficult to manage. Further, it was necessary to consider whether close involvement would place the researcher as an advocate for mainstreaming rather than critical observer, especially given a background of previous work in the area

Interviews with the second category of interviewees – those involved with informing the development of mainstreaming, were set up in a similar manner, using existing contacts and making requests first by phone and followed by further information by email. Again, an interview schedule was used, though here there was more emphasis on eliciting a narrative from interviewees of their perceptions of the process. Unlike with the internal interviews, temporal distance was a factor here. Interviewees were asked to comment on events which had happened some time ago. In order both to supplement the information from these interviewees, and to provide contemporary accounts, the archive of Engender newsletters was also analysed. In addition, recent collections of personal accounts of the devolution period were extremely helpful, in particular Breitenbach and Mackay (2001). As the data in these works is used in a new way, it is considered along with the interview material as primary data. All primary data, interview and text, is referenced in footnotes, interviews are identified by number and date.

Figure 1. Tree diagram of coding used in analysing interviews.



Transcribing the interviews was a useful process of familiarisation. Once they were transcribed I worked from printed copies of the transcripts. Following transcription, a summary of each interview was written, covering the key points discussed. Based on these summaries an initial report on the interviews with Executive staff was drawn up. The report was structured around the themes of 'definition', 'structure',

'networks/lesson learning', 'difficulties', 'why now?', 'success', 'transformative versus integrationist', and 'policy process'. The themes were informed by the researcher's understanding of what were likely to be key issues, in part through the selection of topics for interview. Further readings of the transcripts led to the identification of new themes, arising more strongly from the data itself. These new themes were based on grouping the data into categories of challenges, responses and further issues arising from responses. Each of these categories was then divided into sub-themes, and the resulting coding structure is represented in figure 1.

Re-analysing the data in the light of this new structure, and thinking about the kind of issues these themes and sub-themes represented, it became clear that they could be reinterpreted as problems of and responses to knowledge issues. With this insight, I returned to the interview transcripts, and copied and pasted key points relating to this theme into a new document. Working from hard copy, each point was colour-coded by interviewee reference number and then cut out. Next the coded paper was physically sorted and resorted aiding analysis of how each related to the others, and to the overall theme of knowledge. Software for qualitative analysis was considered for the analysis of interview material; specifically the NuDIST package. Training in NuDIST had highlighted both the benefits of such packages, in particular the ability to work with large amounts of data and to sort across themes and across data sets, as well as the drawbacks, including the potential for analysis to become overly influenced by initial coding structures. The process of manual analysis, including the physical manipulation of data as described above, had the benefit of assisting the mental manipulation and reconsideration of initial coding structures and the exploration of new categories and themes. It was the final stage of this process of analysis that provided the insight for the thesis; that understanding mainstreaming as a knowledge question enables us to better understand the difficulties faced by those charged with its implementation and requires us to reassess the extent to which strategic framing is possible.

The process of drafting and re-drafting itself has been a further stage of analysis. Just as the policy studied has been reconstructed through its implementation, so in writing, the analyst's ideas have developed, and changed.

3

The UK and Gender Equality Strategies: from separatism to the ‘heart of policy’?

Banaszak et al (2003, p. 3) note that between the 1970s and the 1990s, women's movements in the US, Canada and West Europe have 'moved from an early radicalism, autonomy, and challenge to the state... to a more moderate, state-involved, and accommodationist stance'. This shift has been in response to a 'reconfiguring' of the state which has both created 'new opportunities for advocating feminist agendas' but which 'also threatens feminist successes', and which has itself been informed by feminist movements (2003, p. 3). To take advantage of these new opportunities, feminists must be alert to the discursive shifts accompanying reconfiguration and frame their demands accordingly. It was noted in chapter one that European feminists identified the potential for mainstreaming to advance gender claims within a neo-liberal climate hostile to the extension of legislative approaches. In the UK, the process by which mainstreaming came to be the official approach to equal opportunities can be seen as an intensification of the shift in relations between the state and women's movements described by Banaszak et al (2003). This chapter explores this shift from a largely antagonistic stance, through strategic engagement to a rhetorical position of compatibility as encapsulated in mainstreaming, and considers the constraints which current discursive contexts place on the framing of mainstreaming. It is based on the understanding that the particular form of the interactions between any given state and women's movement will be 'structured by previous interactions as well as the characteristics of both actors and the political context' (Banaszak et al., 2003, p. 19).

The history of gender policy and machinery at the UK level

Stetson and Mazur (1995, p. 1) state 'the most striking consequence of over 25 years of women's movement activism has been the array of institutional arrangements inside democratic states devoted to women's policy questions.' By the late 1990s, pressure from women's organisations and individual women both within political parties and externally, combined with a reform agenda based upon modernising government, had created a climate in the UK that was at least rhetorically more open to women's interests and concerns than previously. At the same time, the scope for redistributive policies and for understanding inequalities as structural phenomena was declining (Lister, 2001; Franklin, 2000) as these became marked as symbols of 'Old Labour' politics, and were passed over in favour of a new emphasis on responsibility. Paradoxically, as rhetorical and physical space for 'women' increased,³² feminism was increasingly rejected (McRobbie, 2000). Balancing the dangers of dilution, cooptation and assimilation with the benefits to be gained from access to state power is a dilemma that underlies all engagement with the state by social movements. These dilemmas of state engagement have been a key issue for the women's movement in Britain as elsewhere, and the movement has been comparatively 'slow' to engage with a state viewed as bureaucratic and incapable of meeting its needs (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993; Perrigo, 1996, p. 118). The commitment to inclusive, participatory and non-hierarchical principles of organising held by many within the movement has been hard to reconcile with the workings of state bureaucracies (Mackay, 1996, p. 215), yet, increasingly, non-intervention is not considered a viable option.

Why was state engagement an issue?

During the 1960s and 1970s, the British women's movement maintained a largely sceptical position towards the UK state, and separatism was on the whole the preferred strategy as feminists attempted to build organisations based on the values of democracy, participation, and the absence of hierarchy (Byrne, 1996; Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). During the 1980s, and particularly at local government level,

³² The number of female representatives in the House of Commons doubled following the 1997 General Election from 9 to 18% of all MPs.

there was a shift to greater involvement. This shift reflected a need to address the failure of existing machinery for the promotion of women's interests to government, a growing recognition (by some) of the importance of the state for women, and growing fragmentation within the women's movement itself. It was also informed by the development of theoretical analyses of the state as a heterogeneous and differentiated structure (Rowbotham et al, 1979; Cockburn, 1991; Halford, 1992; Watson, 1992a).

The main institutionalised routes for relaying women's interests to government during this period were the Women's National Commission (WNC) created in 1969,³³ the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) created in 1975 (under section 6 of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act)³⁴, and interested Members of Parliament. Direct lobbying of Ministers, Officials and Parliament, political protest and attempts to influence party manifestos and policy apparatus were important additional sources of pressure. The poor representation of women in parliament and in decision-making positions in political parties made this route largely ineffective: in 1970, women were only 4.1% of all MPs (Lovenduski, 1996).³⁵ In addition, both the WNC and the EOC operated under significant constraints and had serious limitations. Though later to become a much more active force, the EOC was initially characterised by timidity and inactivity due to staffing issues and concerns about its position vis-à-vis government (Breitenbach, 1990; Lovenduski, 1995) and was consequently a disappointment to many feminists. For its part, the WNC tended towards conservatism. Further, restrictions on its membership to groups that had been in existence a number of years and which had a national presence and membership excluded most if not all women's liberation groups and thus meant it 'lack[ed] true representativeness of women's interests' (Gelb, 1989).³⁶

³³ The WNC was to be the official and independent advisory body giving the views of women to the government. An umbrella organisation, it represents women and women's organisations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is currently based within the Department of Trade and Industry and is an advisory Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB), meaning it is fully funded by government but able to comment freely on government policy. ([file:///see http://www.thewnc.org.uk/about_us/index.html](http://www.thewnc.org.uk/about_us/index.html)).

³⁴ Also an NDPB, the EOC is funded primarily through government, and though independent, is responsible to government, currently through the Equality Minister. In 1978 a Scottish Office was opened in Glasgow.

³⁵ Women's representation remained at this very low level during the 1970s and 1980s. With the exception of a slight rise in the October 1974 election to 4.3%, the percentage of MPs who were women actually fell between 1970 and 1987, when it rose to 6.3% (figures from Lovenduski, 1996, p. 9)

³⁶ 'Groups' is later replaced by 'partners' — see Banaszak et al., p128 for discussion.

As it became clear that neither the Sex Discrimination Act nor the EOC were delivering the anticipated results, the argument that this 'implementation gap' needed to be addressed from within the system grew in strength (Byrne, 1996). In addition, criticism from within the women's movement of a reliance on overly functionalist accounts of the state, and of a tendency to see both the state and women's interests as unitary entities, raised the need for more sophisticated analyses, which allowed for the state as a potential source for good as well as evil (Waylen, 1998).³⁷ At a practical level, the need for funding meant that previously autonomous organisations such as rape crisis and refuge centres increasingly turned towards the state for support (Mackay, 1996), and the election of a Conservative government highlighted the weaknesses of working outside the system (Perrigo, 1996, p. 118). While analyses differed within the women's movement, recognition of the importance of the state as an arena for women grew. As Mackay says, 'we may recognize the scope and variety of politics in a multiplicity of domains, but we cannot dismiss the importance of the state: whether we conceive it to be instrumental or chaotic, monolithic or differentiated, closed or permeable, the state and its institutions are a significant locus of power (2001a, p. 206). As a result, the poor level of women's access to government and their marginal position in political parties became an issue of increasing importance to, and focus of, women's groups.

Moves to state feminism

The election of the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher in 1979 spurred many feminists to join opposition parties, particularly the Labour Party, and to become more active in trades unions and community groups. In doing so, they joined others, for instance feminist trade unionists, who had always been active in these institutional settings. As a consequence of this move, their demands were increasingly framed in terms of better representation within these institutions as well as in terms of policy areas. One significant arena of feminist activity was at Local Government level, where the creation of Women's Committees provided opportunities for women to work explicitly as feminists within the local state (Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001, p. 11; Lieberman, 1989; Watson, 1992a, Edwards,

³⁷ Criticisms of the women's movements' portrayal of 'women's interests' by black and lesbian feminists were important in raising awareness of the difficulty of speaking of women as a homogenous group. See for example, Mirza (1997) and Lovenduski and Randall (1993).

1989; 1995; Halford, 1988, 1992).³⁸ As the first significant example of an attempt to bring feminist practice, values and analysis to the internal workings of state bodies, Lieberman argues that women's committees 'act as a commentary on the difficulties and conflicts involved ... when a body of ideas which are essentially at variance with institutional norms are translated into the institutional setting' (1989, p. 247). As discussed below, this experience has provided lessons for the development of mainstreaming at the national level. The first Local Government Women's Committee (LGWC) was established by the Greater London Council in 1982. By 1989 there were approximately 32 full standing Women's committees or sub-committees throughout the UK, with five in Scotland (Lieberman, 1989), and by 1990 a further three had been established in Scotland in addition to four new equal opportunities committees (Breitenbach, 1990).³⁹ Lovenduski suggests that the appearance of these committees in part reflects the hostility of feminists to the early EOC (1995, p. 129) and in London and other large centres in the south they have been associated with the rise of the 'urban left' (Goss, 1984). Women's committees followed in other parts of England and in Scotland, but they emerged less from a desire by new younger labour councillors to support equal opportunities, than as a result of campaigning by women party activists to obtain manifesto commitments (Lieberman, 1989). Edwards (1995) has argued that women's committees are a democratising and empowering influence, and thus provide models of feminist practice with which other movements concerned with addressing democratic deficit could usefully engage.

Local Government Women's Committees as precursors of mainstreaming

Exploring 'the *implicit gender implications of council policies and local authority practices* and explicitly promot[ing] new and positive policies for women' (Halford, 1998, p. 251, my emphasis) was the aim, implemented to different degrees, of many women's initiatives in Local Government. Thus while many of the committees' activities would come under the heading of 'positive action' they were also

³⁸ Sometimes the term 'women's initiatives' is used to describe a range of related structures developed covering women's committees, sub-committees, working parties and equal opportunities initiatives e.g. Halford, (1988) — and Edwards (1989) has demonstrated that a lower status committee does not necessarily reflect a lack of political support and that full status does not guarantee success.

³⁹ During the 1990s there has been a trend towards the creation of generic equal opportunities committees rather than specific women's or race initiatives.

concerned with demonstrating the gendered effects of 'mainstream' council policy and practice. The individual remits of committees varied from one to another, ranging from what we would retrospectively label a mainstreaming approach aimed at 'introducing a women's perspective into all aspects of social policy and service provision' to the more modest 'elimination of discrimination against women in the Council's employment policies and practices' (Edwards, 1989, p. 53).⁴⁰ The 'integrationist' approach, as the former of these became known, has served as an important source of learning for mainstreaming strategies (Mackay and Bilton, 2000). The principles underlying integrationist approaches were the same as those now informing feminist versions of mainstreaming, thus, for Edwards, the 'unique value of LGWCs is that they can employ the resources and procedures of local government to effect transformational change upon itself' and such transformational strategies are essential because without them 'the activities of LGWCs remain marginal to the activities of local government as a whole' (Edwards, 1995, p. 166).

There are very interesting parallels between Edwards' analysis of LGWCs and current analyses of mainstreaming strategies. In particular she notes as sources of difficulty the lack of a legal basis or statutory duty to promote equality, the subsequent dependence upon political patronage, professional jealousies and organisational constraints and inadequate representation and support from women in the community (1989, p. 55), all of which have been raised as issues in relation to units charged with mainstreaming at a national level. Similarly, Lieberman (1989) points to unrealistic expectations of women's officers, insufficient resources, a lack of clarity as to realistic objectives, priorities and means, institutional marginalisation and internal resistance or opposition. In addition, and of particular interest for this thesis, Edwards remarks that 'when one of the Scottish women's committees states that it changes its terms of reference each year, it could be reflecting the extent to which – given this lack of clarity about the scope of women's committees — their existence requires regular renegotiation' (1989, p. 54). In chapters six and seven I identify a process of constant renegotiation and re-framing of the scope and purpose of units involved in mainstreaming in the Scottish Executive, suggesting that this serves to paper over conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames.

⁴⁰ Edwards does not give a direct reference for these quotes, which she has taken from actual terms of reference of existing women's committees, as the point is their typicality to many committees.

The local level continues to be a key resource and impetus for mainstreaming initiatives, with the EOC in particular championing the issue. Explicit links are also increasingly being made between mainstreaming and the modernisation agenda of local government including community planning, partnership working, 'Best Value' regimes in service delivery, councils as employers, civic governance, democratic renewal and social inclusion. As elsewhere, the development of equal opportunities good practice and mainstreaming remains in pockets at local government level (Mackay and Bilton, 2000). In some cases, mainstreaming has been resisted as it is equated with the disbanding of specific equality machinery and expertise such as women's committees. Experience from local government has nevertheless been important in informing the development of policy at national level.

The development of policy machinery for women at the national level

While the story of women's representation in the UK is usually told with a national focus, the UN has also been a key catalyst for lobbying and the gradual opening of government to women's issues and organisations. The endogenous pressures exerted by the UK women's movement, women working in political parties and in trades unions were supported by exogenous pressure from, amongst other sources, European feminists and feminists working through the UN. The influence of the UN is particularly pertinent for this analysis as it was a key route for the initial diffusion of the mainstreaming strategy. Initially the major impact of UN's Decade for Women (1975 – 1985) on relations between women and the UK state centred on the creation of new policy machinery for women, however, the UN also began to promote the concept of mainstreaming during this period, increasingly linking the two agendas. This dimension is thus important for understanding the adoption and subsequent framings of the mainstreaming strategy in the 1990s. In what follows, traces of the mainstreaming strategy are found in the language or framing of gender policy initiatives in the UK, although explicit mention of the strategy is not evident until later. This priming during the 1980s and early 1990s helps to explain how mainstreaming was diffused so easily down this route following the Beijing conference. The requirements for national policy machinery had direct consequences in the UK as we see below.

Through the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) the UN has recommended the establishment of women's policy machinery in national governments since the 1960s (Stetson and Mazur, 1995, p. 3). The EOC was established not only in response to pressure from women in the UK, but also to be in keeping with UN policies on women, and in particular, the approaching UN International Year of Women 1975 (Stokes, 2003, p. 185). The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted at the 1985 UN Conference on Women to review and appraise the achievements of the UN's Decade for Women, made the establishment of national policy machinery by each member state central to the implementation of its agenda.

Both the Conservative Government and the Labour opposition responded to UN developments with the creation of machinery to represent women's interests in government and opposition respectively. On the one hand these developments are evidence of a growing recognition of the need to address women's concerns, fuelled in part by a parallel recognition of the importance of the 'women's vote' especially within the Labour party.⁴¹ On the other hand, in practice developments received varying levels of support and commitment and their impact was often limited.

Tentative Moves within the Conservative Party

Within the Conservative Party, signs of increased attention to women's issues over time are evidenced by the development of a Ministerial Group on Women in 1986 and its subsequent elevation to Cabinet status in 1992. Possible explanations for the rise in prominence of women's issues are found external to the Government, in developments in the UN and the Labour Party and as a result of pressure from the women's movement. The Ministerial Group of Women met initially under the auspices of the Home Office to consider the effect of legislation on women (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993) and responsibility for Women's Issues was given to David Waddington, Home Office Minister. The creation of the Ministerial Group was both a response to pressure from the Women's movement (Byrne, 1996) and a

⁴¹ Following Labour's defeat in the 1987 general election, research by its Shadow Communications Agency showed that voters found masculine party images old fashioned and unattractive, and that they believed labour was more male dominated than other parties (Short, 1996) this was particularly prevalent amongst women voters (Eagle and Lovenduski, 1998). Eagle and Lovenduski also state that 'following the 1992 election defeat, senior labour party figures were more willing to concede greater women's representation as part of a strategy to win the next election ... A concerted effort was made to feminise the party and attract women voters' (1998, p. 4).

means of establishing 'the Government's commitment to combating discrimination against women and the implementation of the UN's *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* (CEDAW, 1995, p. 7). The remit of the group was to consider the effect of new legislation on women (Maguire, 1998) and promote a coordinated examination of policy issues of special concern to women (Lovenduski, 1995, p. 126): both aims which are closely related to the mainstreaming strategy and the concept of 'gender proofing' being promoted by the UN at that time.

While the establishment of the Ministerial Group suggested a move towards opening government to the needs and issues of concern to women, in practice it was a paper measure with limited impact; beyond this gesture, the government's rhetorical commitment to equality of opportunity was backed up by little in the way of concrete action (Byrne, 1996). The existence of the Group of Ministers may have been 'one of a few signs that the Conservative leadership became more sensitive to issues of women's equality and representation during the 1980s' (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993, p. 162), but the group only had the power of persuasion to use over other parts of government, just two of its twelve members were women (reflecting the scarcity of women ministers) and none of its members were in cabinet. Despite creating the Group, the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher did not attend its meetings, and ministers only reluctantly accepted the brief of Women's Issues (Lovenduski, 1996; Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). These factors no doubt contributed to fact that while framed within the context of the promotion of mainstreaming by the UN, the group was unable to coordinate policies relating to women between Whitehall departments (Edwards, 1995, p. 123).

The brief of 'women's issues' always formed part of a larger folio, usually that of Home Office minister, though details of which ministers held this brief are difficult to find as they have not been routinely reported as part of Ministerial responsibilities. Angela Rumbold chaired the Ministerial Group from 1990, while her duties as Minister of State at the Home Office included 'women's issues', though she made it a point that she was not a 'Minister for Women' and did not relish the responsibilities for women's issues (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993: 162). In 1992 the Group was upgraded to Cabinet status by John Major and Gillian Shephard was appointed as Employment Secretary with responsibility for Women's Issues, the first time responsibility had gone to a Cabinet Minister and arguably an indication of a greater commitment to issues of women's equality and representation (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993), though the failure of John Major to appoint any women to his first Cabinet in 1990 (Lovenduski, 1996, p. 9) would

suggest otherwise. The move was most likely prompted both by the increased salience of women's issues within the Labour Party (discussed below), and by the upcoming Beijing conference to which the UK government was required to report on its progress on implementing its commitments made at Nairobi.

The Global Platform For Action adopted by member states at the end of the Beijing Conference required them to draw up National Action Plans detailing how the Platform For Action would be implemented. As discussed in chapter one, it also contained a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming and was central to the increasing prominence and diffusion of the strategy. The National Agenda for Action on Equality, drawn up by the Women's National Commission, the EOC (Great Britain) and EOC (Northern Ireland), provided a basis for the UK implementation of the Platform.

In order to carry out its commitment to mainstreaming under the Platform For Action the Conservative government, in 1996, revised its guidance on policy appraisal for different social groups, which it had introduced in 1992. Despite revisions the new guidance, now called Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment (PAET) remained largely ineffective and the mainstreaming strategy did not have a major impact.⁴² While the Conservative government had paid lip service to the principles of mainstreaming by establishing its Ministerial Group on Women, the lack of support for this group, its subsequent ineffectiveness and the weakness of PAET implementation suggested a lack of real commitment to gender machinery in general and the mainstreaming strategy in particular. This is not surprising: within the conservative ethos equality is typically supported only as equality of opportunity, and resistance to more active definitions makes it unlikely that the transformative potential of mainstreaming will be realised.

The Labour Party as a defender of Women's Rights

Though traditionally the Labour Movement has been male dominated with class politics (outwith Socialist Feminist circles) taking little account of gender, feminist inroads, particularly within Trades Unions and the Labour Party increased pressure

⁴² The parallel Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment (PAFT) initiative was used exclusively in the Northern Ireland Office and has now been superseded by new and much more demanding procedures set out in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. For more on mainstreaming in Northern Ireland and the operation of section 75 see Donaghy (2003)

on the Labour Party to support women's rights. At the same time, growing awareness within the Party of the importance of securing the 'women's vote' created a more receptive environment for these demands. Of external factors, support from European Socialist Groups was most important though the UNs promotion of women's rights and mainstreaming created an additional justification for change. Evidence for a growing commitment to promoting women's rights and developing machinery for women's substantive representation can be found in the various Labour Party documents and Manifestos over this period.

The party document *Labour's Programme 1982* was the first to present a serious analysis of, and suggestions for radical solutions to, issues facing women in society (Perrigo, 1996), and Labour party policy documents and manifestos since then have contained specific policy proposals for women.⁴³ The strength of commitment to these issues has varied during this period, and been dependent in part on the presence and position of committed individuals within the Party. One such 'champion' was Jo Richardson (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002; Short, 1996), appointed Labour's spokesperson on women's affairs by the National Executive Committee (NEC) in 1984 in response to women's mobilisation (Perrigo, 1996).⁴⁴ In 1986, Richardson introduced a discussion document entitled *Labour's Ministry for Women's Rights* and the NEC endorsed this in 1987 (Perrigo, 1996). Labour launched its election campaign in 1987 with the promise of a Ministry for Women led by a woman Secretary of State and with women holding top civil service jobs, in a paper entitled *Labour's Ministry for Women*. In 1989 a monitoring group on women's issues and a Shadow Ministry for Women were established, again seen as an acknowledgement of the political significance of gender (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). By 1990 the monitoring group was 'consistently involved in policy discussions' (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993)

Richardson continued to work on proposals for a Ministry, and commitments were made again in Labour's 1990 policy document and in its 1992 Party Manifesto *It's time to get Britain working again*. In the six months prior to the 1992 general election, discussions between Richardson and the Head of the Civil Service, Sir Robin Butler, were held on how such machinery would be established in the event of a Labour victory (Short, 1996, p. 24).

⁴³ See, for example, Lovenduski (2005).

⁴⁴ She succeeded Joan Lester in the post (Gelb, 1989, p. 56)

Reframing women's demands within New Labour discourse

With the rise of Labour's modernising project, which coincided with Mo Mowlam's appointment to the post of Shadow Minister for Women in 1992, questions were raised within the party about its commitment to a Ministry for Women. Using the media as a vehicle for debate, it was suggested that the commitment to a Women's Ministry, like that to LGWCs, had become part of Labour's 'loony left image' (Short, 1996, p. 25). Party leader John Smith requested Clare Short, as Shadow Minister for Women, to review and report on the commitment in the light of this debate, but died before this was possible. Signifying a shift in the Party's stance, a consultation document was produced in 1995 (driven by Short) asking the party and women's organisations for their views on alternative ways forward. The proposals in *Governing for Equality* contained a Minister for Women in Cabinet Office and several initiatives to ensure women's issues had a place in debate, but no explicit mention of a Ministry: lessons from other countries had suggested that a Ministry could either be a dumping ground or strategically influential, and the proposed measures hoped to avoid the former (Short, 1996, p. 25). In the media the shift was interpreted as a downgrading of Labour's commitments, with for instance, Benedict Brogan commenting in the Herald that 'Labour drops plans for a Ministry for Women' as they are seen as 'too costly and too politically correct'.⁴⁵ The Ministry had been more decisively dropped by the time Tessa Jowell, then shadow Minister for Women, published the *Strategy for Women* in 1996 (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002, p. 61).⁴⁶ While the new proposals did not directly use the language of mainstreaming, the wider promotion of the concept made it more possible to suggest that specific policy machinery such as Women's Ministries could result in the ghettoisation of women's issues, and that these interests would be better served by structures designed to ensure women's issues had a place in all areas of government.

Labour in power: advances for women?

Following the Labour victory at the 1997 general election a Women's Unit in the Civil Service and Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women were established. The new government also stated its commitment to mainstreaming and continued to use the

⁴⁵ December 5th, 1995

⁴⁶ Squires and Wickham—Jones argue that the position of the women's agenda within the Labour party was not helped by the inexperience of Janet Anderson, the Shadow Minister for Women in the run up to the 1997 election (2002, p. 61).

PAET guidelines produced under the previous government as the basis of this strategy, revising these in 1998 and circulating the new guidelines to all government departments in November of that year. The new Women's Unit was given responsibility for overseeing the mainstreaming strategy. Labour's previous commitments to women's issues, the presence of women activists within the party, and a desire for change and modernisation gave the appearance of a more fertile ground for mainstreaming initiatives and the promotion of women's issues.

Despite these positive indications, the apparent commitment to women's issues was brought into question by several factors, in particular the lack of a Ministry for Women, the combination of the position of Minister for Women alongside other significant roles, and the manner in which appointments were made. The first Minister for Women, Harriet Harman QC MP held the position alongside that of Secretary of State for Social Security causing Melissa Benn to comment 'Harriet Harman might have been the first ever minister for women with Cabinet rank but the fact that she also held another major office, as Secretary of State for Social Security, suggested that the 'women's job' came as a kind of add-on' (Benn, 2000, p. 40). Adding to this suspicion, the appointment of a Minister for Women appeared something of an afterthought: Blair reportedly called Harman back to inform her of this responsibility having made her Secretary of State for Social Security two days previously (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004, p. 83). The subsequent appointment of Joan Ruddock MP as junior minister for women to support Harriet Harman was welcomed by women's organisations, but her position as the only unpaid minister in the government⁴⁷ was criticised by commentators claiming, for example, that 'Joan Ruddock's decision to perform the role of Harman's deputy without payment sent out a strange, contradictory message about the importance, or otherwise, of women's work' (Benn, 2000, p. 40).⁴⁸

The Women's Unit (WU) has continued to be subject to insitutional uncertainty, in part because it has been attached to the current Minister for Women and there have been high rates of turnover and transfer of this position. Consequently the Unit has

⁴⁷ Ruddock had a salary as the member for Lewisham Deptford, but this was not supplemented, as would be normal, by a ministerial salary, her appointment having been made after the quota of ministerial salaries had already been apportioned.

⁴⁸ See also Yvonne Ruddock, *The Independent*, 13th June, 1997

experienced frequent changes of location and of Minister.⁴⁹ Initially based in the Department of Social Security under Harman, the WU moved to the Cabinet office in 1998 when both Harman and Ruddock were sacked in June that year. Baroness Jay (Leader of House of Lords) and Tessa Jowell (Minister for Health) were appointed in their place. Following the General Election in 2001 the WU was restructured as the Women and Equality Unit (WEU). Patricia Hewitt MP, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry, was appointed Minister for Women, with Sally Morgan, her deputy as Minister for Women in the Cabinet Office until she returned to Downing Street in November 2001 to work on government public relations.⁵⁰ Barbara Roche MP succeeded Morgan as deputy minister until September 2003. As a by-product of the reshuffle following Stephen Byers' resignation the WEU was moved again, this time to the Department for Trade and Industry in May 2002. In June 2003 Jacqui Smith MP became the Deputy minister for Women and Equality, Hewitt remains in post as Minister for Women and Equality. The Unit also lacked stability of leadership within the Civil Service, with four Heads of Unit during this period. Initially the position was held by a member of DSS, then Fiona Reynolds (1998 – 2000), whose employment history was in the environmental charity sector, followed by Susan Atkins, a career civil servant on two year loan from the Home Office (2000 – 2002) and then Angela Mason (2003 – present), formerly executive director of Stonewall, an organisation which campaigns for gay rights.⁵¹

Early evaluation of the WU/WEU has not been optimistic, noting its vague and broad remit and its marginalisation within Whitehall (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002; 2004; Beveridge et al., 2000). Assessments of the mainstreaming strategy have been similarly pessimistic. Writing in 2000, Beveridge et al. found that 'as yet there is no clear view in government as to what mainstreaming entails or ought to entail in a United Kingdom context' (2000, p. 185). Their assessment of PAET found significant weaknesses in the process. Specifically the guidelines gave 'only the vaguest direction on what PAET's purpose is ... or how PAET proposals are to be conducted' (2000, p. 188). Further they noted that departments had a great deal of

⁴⁹ Much of the information from this section is drawn from Squires and Wickham—Jones, 2002; 2004 and from Breitenbach, Notes for seminar presentation on 'Gender Equality Strategies in the Scottish Executive and Whitehall', Department of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh, March 2003.

⁵⁰ Sally Morgan was not an MP, therefore in order to allow her to take up her position as a Minister for State in the Cabinet Office she was also appointed a member of the House of Lords at this point (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page2692.asp>)

⁵¹ On the opposition side, Theresa May MP, Shadow Spokesman for Schools, Disabled People and Women 1998 – June 1999, Caroline Spelman MP, Conservative Party Spokesman on Health and Women's Issues, June 1999 – September 2001, Eleanor Laing MP, Shadow Minister for Women 2004 –

discretion as to how they employed PAET, and the absence of machinery in place to monitor progress (Beveridge et al., 2000, p. 188). An internal assessment suggests that while the mainstreaming approach has resulted in some joint work with departments with the intention of producing case studies of successful gender mainstreaming, outcomes have been limited, and that in many respects mainstreaming could be said to exist 'only in a very weak and attenuated form'.⁵² As will be seen, mainstreaming developments at the UK level have been unfavourably compared to those of the devolved governments (Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Beveridge et al., 2000; Clavero and Daly, 2004).

It was widely speculated in the press and within political circles that the Women's Unit would be disbanded following the 2001 election, and indeed those within the Unit did not know what its fate would be.⁵³ In the event the Unit was maintained, and even expanded and strengthened in its new guise as the Women and Equality Unit (WEU). The WEU took responsibility for policy on gender equality issues including sex discrimination and equal pay and became sponsor of the EOC and the WNC as well as taking on the Kingsmill Review into women's employment and pay. At the same time, the remit of the Unit was narrowed to focus on measurable outputs (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004, p. 86), though in fact much 'un-measurable' work continued on research and information generation (2004, p. 92). The Unit has also demonstrated an increasing focus on economic issues, and it is suggested that the business argument rather than equality often drives the agenda (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004, p. 93).

Modernisation and the ambiguous position of women

These somewhat contradictory messages about the importance attached to women's issues by the new government were echoed in its 'modernising' approach more generally. An emphasis on joined-up government and tackling cross-cutting issues appeared to offer a greater potential to address issues of concern to women, and to mainstream a gender perspective throughout policy and decision making. On the other hand, while New Labour placed women at the centre of much of its talk, it displaced any overt reference to feminism. As McRobbie says 'New Labour, with

⁵² Breitenbach, Notes for seminar presentation on 'Gender Equality Strategies in the Scottish Executive and Whitehall', Department of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh, March 2003.

⁵³ Breitenbach, Notes for seminar presentation on 'Gender Equality Strategies in the Scottish Executive and Whitehall', Department of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh, March 2003.

the Third Way as its ideological arm, seeks to reach out over the heads of feminists and speak instead to 'ordinary women' (2000, p. 99), who 'on inspection turn out to be a very particular group of the 'corporate/suburban woman' (p. 100). In addition, an emphasis on 'social exclusion' was central to New Labour philosophy, arguably symptomatic of a larger shift away from concern with the structural inequalities underlying both social exclusion and gender inequality, towards a pragmatic focus on specific and localised problems (Lister, 2001). Pragmatism and populism (PAP) thus gain a central place in New Labour's Third Way (Powell, 2000).

At the beginning of this chapter it was argued that the process by which mainstreaming came to be the official approach to equal opportunities in the UK can be seen as an intensification of the shift in relations between the state and women's movements described by Banaszak et al (2003). Banaszak et al note that the structural changes brought by reconfiguration – in Britain particularly 'lateral loading' in the form of privatisation and the increasing outsourcing of government functions to quasi-non governmental organisations (quangos) and executive agencies and the 'offloading' of various responsibilities to civil society organisations such as the 'family' and 'community' – will be accompanied by a discursive shift which 'may alter the frames and issues of women's movements' (Banaszak et al. 2003, p. 23). Specifically, 'the neoliberal, anti-collectivist rhetoric of the reconfigured state limits women's movements to issues that will resonate with the wider public' and 'the policy discourse of the state is limited to certain views of women (for example as mothers or workers), which may constrain the range of potential movement action' (p. 23). New Labour's modernising project, and its 'ideological arm' of the 'Third Way', represent a further discursive shift associated with its attempt to promote itself as a party of social justice at the same time as it continues these processes of state reconfiguration. The next section explores the implications of this discursive shift for the framing of women's demands through the strategy of mainstreaming.

Framing mainstreaming in the UK

As we saw in chapter one, mainstreaming entered the UK government agenda directly through the UN via the National Action Plan required by the Beijing Platform For Action, and through the EU via Recommendation R(98)14 on Gender Mainstreaming. Two further routes were also significant. Firstly, the EOC (GB) has been a key advocate of mainstreaming within the UK and also had links with the

EU on mainstreaming — its project ‘mainstreaming equality in local government’ was funded under the Fourth Action programme – creating a route for policy transfer. Secondly, as discussed earlier, the history of ‘integration’ policies within local government in the UK can be seen as a precursor of mainstreaming strategies providing both positive lessons as well as cautionary tales.

With the rise of New Labour and the implementation of its ‘modernising government’ agenda following victory in the 1997 general election, mainstreaming received, at least rhetorically, a new lease of life, bolstered by the Treaty of Amsterdam, also of 1997, which committed all European Union member states to mainstreaming equality between women and men in all their policies. The framing of mainstreaming as the ‘new’ approach to equal opportunities was conducive to its adoption by a government with a preference for the modern. As in other cases, the ‘need’ for frame alignment with dominant political values has had continuing repercussions for the development of mainstreaming in the UK. In the following paragraphs I discuss some of the criticisms of New Labour’s philosophy which relate to its understanding of the nature of inequality and which have thus shaped the context in which mainstreaming can be defined and understood. Given that ‘frame resonance’ with dominant political norms and values is shown to be so important for the successful adoption of mainstreaming strategies, and with regard to the possibilities for ‘rhetorical entrapment’, the criticisms of New Labour thinking in respect to issues of inequality discussed below suggest that prospects for a transformative development of the mainstreaming strategy at a UK level are not good.⁵⁴ Initial assessments of UK mainstreaming policy support this view (Beveridge et al., 2000; Squires undated; Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002, 2004; Clavero and Daly, 2004).

From a politics of redistribution to ‘opportunity for all’

New Labour has been keen to move away from ‘Old Labour’ commitments to equality of outcome and redistributive politics (Lister, 2001, p. 434), in part because these are hard to reconcile with a consensual approach to politics (Benn, 2000; Forbes, 2002). In their place, New Labour has promoted the concept of ‘opportunity

⁵⁴ Squires (undated, p. 26) suggests that ‘the adoption of mainstreaming as a theoretical approach and political strategy has been shaped to some considerable extent by its potential to resonate positively with wider Governmental priorities and discourses in relation to economic productivity and modernization’.

for all' (Bastow and Martin, 2003) combining a commitment to social justice with an emphasis on individual responsibility, including responsibilities to 'the community'. The principle of opportunity for all is based upon an idea of equal moral worth, 'regardless of' race, gender, disability, age etc. and a belief in a meritocratic society as the best way for individuals to achieve their potential. In such a society, prejudice and discrimination, rather than socio-economic status, become the primary obstacles to human freedom (Bastow and Martin, 2003, p. 53).

A key premise of the 'opportunity for all' frame is that through the removal of barriers to opportunity, a society is created that is better for everyone, and in which no one has to lose. The consequent reluctance to discuss the redistribution of power or resources between women and men is evidence of a 'win-win' philosophy which pervades New Labour discourse. Critics argue that New Labour's ambition to 'level up' (not down) is at odds with addressing gender inequality, which concerns the distribution of finite resources – time and power (Coote 2000, p. 2).⁵⁵ As Coote says, '[e]quality of opportunity requires a redistributive deal between women and men. But that does not chime in with an inclusive, loser-free politics.' The desire to present consensus and to emphasise the benefits to all in working together to promote greater equality (as opportunity) has the effect that 'any suggestion that women have a distinct set of interests and a politics of their own is seen as conflictual' (Franklin, 2000, p. 141) and therefore undesirable. This creates a paradox for a government espousing a mainstreaming strategy, as on Franklin's reading, 'it is unnecessary, in this view, to have a gendered approach to policy making' (2000, p. 141).

It is important to note that for many feminists the goal of gender equality also represents a better world for women and men, but the win-win potential implied here is realisable only with a transformation of the current value system. Widening out the understanding of gender equality from an equation solely with — and therefore as only of relevance to — women, to an understanding of the issue as of vital importance to — and therefore the responsibility of — both men and women is increasingly recognised as an essential project for feminists (Connell, 2005). This strategy is clearly evident in the framing of mainstreaming through the UN and

⁵⁵ I am dubious as to whether 'levelling up' is actually possible in terms of economic inequality, especially if one is talking about eradicating rather than alleviating poverty. Obviously, if poverty is seen as a relational concept, then 'levelling up' will not work unless it is possible to level everyone up to the highest position, which seems unlikely.

Council of Europe and, as we shall see, by Scottish academic activists (see chapter five). Efforts to persuade men to share the burden for change are not new, but common to many initiatives, for example, women party or trades union activists seeking support from male colleagues, or projects to involve men in understanding and changing their violent behaviour. These projects, while recognising the benefits to many groups of men in pursuing change, are also based both on an acute awareness of the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 2005) from which men as a group continue to benefit on a global scale, and on a recognition that the benefits and costs of this dividend are unequally distributed amongst men. Without this awareness, and in the absence of any discussion of the redistribution and transformation necessary to achieve change, an emphasis on mutual benefits looks suspiciously like no more than a reassurance to those in positions of power that they will not have to relinquish it.

Mainstreaming is frequently framed at a UK level as better for society as a whole, better for women *and men* (Squires, Equality and Diversity, undated, p. 23), in an attempt to achieve resonance between gender equality and a consensual win-win approach. A logical consequence of such framing would be an understanding of gendered analysis as less about how a given gender order produces the subject positions of both 'men' and 'women', than as the need to counter a 'bias' towards women by also looking at the inequalities faced by men. The concern with boys' underachievement in schools which has received much attention (and which has not been accompanied by a discussion of why the higher achievement of girls at this level has consistently not translated into even equal positions in job markets) would appear to lend support to this argument.

In this context, the understanding of 'gender' becomes very important. Given the above the decision to rename the Women's Unit the Women and Equality Unit may either reflect an interest in the power relations between men and women (as gender might be understood by many feminists), including an analysis of how men (as well as women) are differentially affected by gender depending on the intersecting variables of race, class, disability and so on, or, a concern to redress a perceived imbalance by considering the inequalities faced by men as a group.

Pragmatism and Populism

Another trait of New Labour policy has been to join a social justice agenda with a liberal individualism with the result that new ways of formulating policy, based more on pragmatic needs than ideological standpoint, are made possible. Lister (2001, p. 427), for example, argues that a pragmatist politics has resulted in a 'what works' approach rather than a direct assault on structural inequalities, which, combined with a tendency to 'woo' rather than 'lead' the electorate (populism) leads to an unwillingness to speak about redistribution – the 'r' word. Thus, in gender politics, 'instead of a systematic gendered analysis, the inequalities still faced by women are reduced to a series of individual problems, faced by particular groups of women, such as lone mothers' (2001, p. 434). The influence of this shift on the work of the WEU is evident in its focus on single-issue agendas and measurable outputs, for example on lone mothers and teenage girls.

The practice of combining social justice measures with economic efficiency has become increasingly central to the framing of mainstreaming at a UK level (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2004).⁵⁶ In this context, frame alignment has favoured arguments for mainstreaming 'as better for both women and men, as improving productivity and as facilitating better, more modern government' (Squires, undated, p. 23). Economic consequences of mainstreaming have often received the most importance within this frame, such that 'even domestic violence is approached in terms of its economic consequences' (Squires, Equality and Diversity, undated, p. 24).

Labour's approach to gender equality has been developed within the wider context of its focus on social exclusion. The social exclusion unit is often seen as a 'sister' unit to the WU / WEU (for example Squires and Wickham-Jones). The concept of social exclusion has also received much criticism from writers who find that it is redefining problems of inequality in terms of economic participation rather than as the result of historical and structural processes (Levitas, 1998; Lister, 2001).

⁵⁶ Powell suggests that the seeds of much of New Labour's discourse may be found in the report of the Commission on Social Justice (1994) 'which declared that social justice and economic efficiency 'are two sides of the same coin'' (2000, p. 43).

Displacement politics

For Lister, what is happening in New Labour politics with regard to both general socio-economic and gender inequalities is a 'process of displacement'. Drawing on Percy Smith (2000), she argues that this process takes place through 'a focus on paid work as synonymous with social inclusion, a penchant for targeted area-based and social security/pensions policies and a 'what works' problem-solving approach' (2001, p. 430). This process is led by a shift in Labour's philosophy which itself has stemmed from two tendencies; firstly to consider economic globalisation as an immutable economic fact rather than something which can be shaped politically, and secondly, a reluctance to challenge the powerful on behalf of the powerless. The process of displacement is a symptom of 'a paradigm shift from a concern with equality to a focus on social inclusion and opportunity, with which comes responsibility' (2001, p. 430). Concern with the prominence given to exclusion at the expense of structural inequality is also at the centre of Levitas' criticisms: '[t]he solution implied by a discourse of social exclusion is a minimalist one: a transition across the boundary to become an insider rather than an outsider in a society whose structural inequalities remain largely uninterrogated' (1998, p. 7).

Some government policies have been (often implicitly) aimed at benefiting women, especially those relating to the tax system and childcare, but as Rake's (2001) analysis of New Deal Programmes demonstrates, implicit gender bias built into these policies subtracts from their beneficial potential and 'sustains the long-standing undervaluation of unpaid caring work' (2001, p. 226). Further, the government's reluctance to claim successes as successes for women is an indication of the extent to which addressing women as a group is out of fashion.

Conclusions

If Franklin is correct in her assertion that New Labour thinking renders a gendered analysis unnecessary, then this places the WEU in an extremely difficult position, and would be a significant factor in explaining why greater progress with mainstreaming has not been made. For the Unit to pursue a mainstreaming strategy entails making explicit the ways in which women do have a distinct set of interests and thus challenges the bases of consensual loser-free politics. Squires and Wickham-Jones' (2002) similarly find that one of the difficulties facing the WU was that it was out of 'ideological alignment' 'with many of the values underpinning

Blair's New Labour project' (2002, p. 68). While this analysis suggests an overly homogenous view of government – it is unlikely that there is one clear ideological line through government⁵⁷, it also highlights the presence of frame conflict at a level fundamental to the New Labour project.

The political context across the UK is not uniform, however, and devolution has provided a 'window of opportunity' for mainstreaming advocates in the UK. Scotland is generally seen to be pursuing a more participatory and democratic framing of mainstreaming than has been possible at UK level (Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Beveridge et al, 2000; Clavero and Daly, 2004). The context in Scotland has been shaped by the role of women in linking the frames of equality and 'new politics' in the run up to devolution, and by the presence of a far greater number of female representatives in the Scottish Parliament than at Westminster. We would therefore expect that the possibilities for the framing of mainstreaming would be different in Scotland from those at the UK level. The realisation of the transformative potential of mainstreaming is dependent on the manner in which it is implemented, and on the existence or lack of barriers, or, to use the language of social movement theorists, of favourable opportunity structures, mobilising structures (advocacy networks) and strategic framing (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2000, p. 432; 2002, p. 340). It is also significantly affected by the constraints that existing dominant values and norms exert on the framings available to policy advocates. In the next chapter I look at the Scottish experience in the context of this discussion of the development and framing of the mainstreaming strategy in the UK.

⁵⁷ I have taken this point from comments made by Esther Breitenbach, Notes for presentation on Women's Equality Institutions and their Potential', Birkbeck College, London, January 2003.

4

Women and Scottish Devolution: from ‘a politics of place and voice’ to mainstreaming

This chapter explores the background to the development of a mainstreaming strategy in Scotland. While there have been similar shifts towards greater state engagement by feminists at both Scottish and UK levels, the distinctiveness of Scottish feminist organising, the interrelated factor of devolution, and differences between the UK and Scottish state have resulted in significantly different state feminist relations and a different political climate. This chapter is concerned with these differences, and how they have structured the possible framings of the mainstreaming strategy. The campaign for greater women’s representation which has been central to devolution in Scotland has been characterised by a dual strategy of ‘place and voice’. This chapter is concerned with the second, and less documented strand of this strategy as an important precursor to the development of mainstreaming. It provides a brief discussion of the campaign for gender balance in representation (place) to set this story in its wider context, but the chapter will focus on the less documented story of women’s engagement with the Scottish Office, and the consequences of women’s activities for the development and framing of mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming has been adopted within significantly different political contexts in the UK and Scotland, and this has impacted on the way in which it has been framed in these two arenas. In both cases, the activism of women over the last 30 plus years, both in autonomous women’s groups and through formal politics, has been essential in creating space for women’s and equality issues within the state. While women in Scotland have many shared aims and concerns with their UK counterparts, and have campaigned collectively on these, the Scottish women’s movement has developed an increasingly distinctive identity during the 1990s

(Breitenbach, 1996). Scotland's political climate is also significantly different. In both cases, this distinctiveness is bound up with claims for, and the reality of, a devolved Scotland.

In the previous chapter we saw how, at a UK level, the influence of New Labour thinking and the associated project of modernising government have increased possibilities for addressing cross-cutting issues of inequality but within a narrowed conceptual framework. In the context of a fragmented women's movement and the popular attachment to the myth of a post-feminist age, mainstreaming has developed along expert-technocratic rather than participatory-democratic lines (Beveridge et al., 2000, p. 390), and the predominant framing of mainstreaming has been an economic one (Squires, undated). At a Scottish level, New Labour thinking has been tempered by several factors: the coalition government between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, a comparatively strong women's movement, greater overlap between formal and informal political spheres through crossover membership of women's networks, trade unions and political parties, a greater perceived attachment to the welfare state and social democracy, the importance of 'deepening democracy' as an aim of devolution, and the central position of equal gender representation within this aim. These factors have created an opportunity for a more participatory-democratic framing of mainstreaming than has been possible at a UK level. To understand how these different framings of mainstreaming have arisen, it is necessary to know more of the historical context of women's claims to representation in Scotland, and of their interaction with the organs of the state, a story in which the theme of the 'double marginalisation' of Scottish Women from the British State is a continuous thread.

Women and the State in Scotland—double marginalisation

Like their counterparts south of the border, women in Scotland pre-devolution had limited access to government. This access, however, was further restricted by geographical distance from London, the dearth of expertise within the Scottish Office in the area of 'women's issues', the increasing disparity between voting patterns in Scotland and parties elected at Westminster and the low representation of Scottish women in decision-making bodies. While the representation of women generally at Westminster was very low, that of women as a proportion of Scottish

MPs was worse. Between 1918 and 1995 only 24 women had represented Scottish constituencies at Westminster (Brown, 1996b). At the 1987 general election, just 10 of the 72 Scottish MPs elected to Westminster were Conservatives, leading to the claim that Scotland was suffering from a 'democratic deficit' (Brown et al. 1998). Further, only 3 of these 72 Scottish MPs were women, causing Scottish women to claim they were experiencing a 'double democratic deficit' (Brown, 1996a, pp. 1 – 2, 1996b; Mackay, 1995). Scottish women simultaneously faced a 'double marginalisation' at the UK level both in formal politics and in academic and feminist analyses and activism, resulting from the marginalised location of Scotland within the British state, and the marginalised position of women within Scottish society (Breitenbach et al., 1998).

Prior to devolution in 1999, the Scottish Office was the administrative arm of government in Scotland, and dialogue between women's organisations and the Scottish Office was very limited. The effects of the 'siege mentality' which characterised the Office under Conservative rule (Ford and Casebow, 2002) and the reluctance to see women's issues as a relevant area of concern combined to make the Scottish Office largely inaccessible. Knowledge within the Scottish Office of gender issues was low and reliant on individuals bringing expertise with them from outside (Breitenbach, 2004). The story of the relationship between women and the Scottish state is one beset by problems of communication, initially characterised by the meeting of two different worlds. In this context mainstreaming, as an elite strategy, provided a common language for policy makers and strategically aware feminists. This story is intertwined in Scotland with strategies to increase women's symbolic and substantive representation and was also spurred by developments in Europe and the UN.

The UN's Decade for Women had a significant impact in Scotland, separate from that at UK level (see chapter 3), and led both to the creation of new bodies and to increasing dialogue between the Scottish Office and Women's organisations. The Scottish Convention of Women (SCOW) was established in 1977 and in 1980 the Scottish Women's Joint Action Group (SJAG) was set up at a meeting called by SCOW to plan events for the mid decade year (Hersh, 1991, p. 118). As at a UK level, women's organisations during the 1980s were increasingly turning towards the state, and SCOW's activities were not confined to those directly of concern to the UN Decade. Through its activities SCOW became an important source for the Scottish Office as the 'official' voice representing Scottish Women and as such was involved in meetings to examine the setting up of a 'Scottish Women's

Commission'.⁵⁸ Both SCOW and SJAG were to be important players in the campaign for constitutional change, which is discussed later.

While the Decade for Women was important, the main impact of the UN's agenda was felt later, in the run up to and aftermath of the Beijing Conference in 1995. As we shall see, by this time women in Scotland were mobilising around the issue of women's representation and the women's movement was growing in strength. In this context, the Beijing conference was used as a lever to gain greater access to officials in the Scottish Office. Dialogue between women's organisations and the Scottish Office subsequently led to the development of women's issues resources in the Scottish branch of the Home Civil Service, following Labour's victory at the 1997 General Election, which were strengthened and developed following devolution in 1999.

The Women's Movement in Scotland

There has been an active women's movement in Scotland since the 1970s, and women in Scotland have shared many of the same concerns and causes as their counterparts south of the border. The movement has also followed broadly the same pattern as the 'UK' / English movement with a largely autonomous focus in the 1970s shifting to a more institutionally engaged stance during the 1980s. Over this period, however, the Scottish women's movement both increasingly developed a distinctively Scottish identity, and grew in strength (Breitenbach, 1990; 1996). As in England, the policies of the Thatcher government adversely affected many women and brought both a greater cohesion between different groups and a greater willingness to engage with parties of the left, trades unions and community groups (Breitenbach, 1990). In contrast to the English experience, this development was also shaped by the fact that Scottish women and men were increasingly voting for parties not elected at Westminster, giving rise to a renewed interest in self-rule and an accompanying interest in issues of identity and the scrutiny of political institutions.

As noted earlier, women's committees have been important in both Scotland and England, but while English initiatives have had an uneven history and a trajectory of decline, the picture in Scotland until the late 1990s was one of steady growth, and

⁵⁸ The SWC was never in fact established.

Scotland has been proportionally well served by such initiatives, having about a third of all women's or equal opportunities initiatives with only around 9% of the population (Mackay, 1995). Similarly, despite 'divisions, diversity and the diffuseness of the women's liberation movement in Scotland' (Breitenbach, 1990) it has suffered less severely from the fragmentation occurring in England / at a UK level (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993; Breitenbach, 1990; 1996). In part this has been a factor of Scotland's smaller geographical size. It is also the result of the existence of strong and interconnected networks of Scottish women, creating links between women in political parties, trade unions, state institutions and autonomous groups and resulting in a greater crossover between formal and informal spaces, giving women in formal politics a strong base from which to operate (Mackay, 1995; Edwards, 1995).⁵⁹ This networking has in turn been galvanised by the issue of women's political representation, which has involved a wide cross-section of Scottish women in a campaign of sustained activity (Breitenbach, 1990; 1996; Mackay 1995; Brown, 1996a, 1996b, Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001).

The election of the Conservative government in 1987 with only 10 seats in Scotland added fresh impetus to the campaign for Home Rule. In contrast to the earlier stages of the campaign, women's groups were closely involved from this point and ensured that gender had a central place on the agenda of the Home Rule movement. The involvement of a wide array of women's groups in the campaign at this point was in contrast to their much more ambivalent position with regards to the movement during the 1970s.⁶⁰ Breitenbach attributes this ambivalence to the newness of work to create an analysis and a body of knowledge concerning women's history and experience in Scotland, and to fears that a Scottish Assembly might prove more reactionary than a Parliament at Westminster (1990, p. 216). Several explanatory factors for women's contrasting high level of involvement in the 1980s and 1990s have been noted, including: the impact of Thatcherite socio-economic policies, the activity of women at an international level in campaigning for greater representation, the increasing participation of women in political parties, trade unions and local government, which had the effect of enabling them to see themselves as capable of standing for political office, a belief in the need for a substantial proportion of elected members to be women, the

⁵⁹ Edwards also notes the key role played by LGWCs in maintaining networking through hosting meetings of the Scottish Women's Forum (1995, p. 124).

⁶⁰ While many women's organisations held a largely ambivalent position with regard to the movement at this point, the Scottish Convention of Women (discussed below) was involved.

opportunity of a new institution to create a 'vision of difference' and a growing frustration with Westminster style politics and the low representation of Scottish women within it (Brown, 1996b; Brown et al., 2002).

The role of women in placing, and maintaining, the issue of equal gender representation in any future parliament on the agenda of the campaign has been well covered elsewhere (see Breitenbach and Mackay, 2001). This emphasis constituted one part of a two-pronged strategy concerned with ensuring both a 'place' for women through gender balance in the membership of any elected body, and also, an institutionalised 'voice' for women through the creation of policy machinery for women and channels for participation and communication. While not ignoring the complexities of the relationship between place and voice, the strategy was informed by the belief that having more female representatives would itself lead to greater voice, that the presence of women would 'make a difference' (Brown, 2001c, p. 245). This chapter is concerned with the second, and less documented strand of this strategy as an important precursor to the development of mainstreaming. It provides a brief discussion of the campaign for gender balance in representation to set this story in its wider context, but the chapter will focus on the less documented story of women's engagement with the Scottish Office, and the consequences of women's activities for the development and framing of mainstreaming.

The Campaign for Gender Balance in a New Scottish Parliament

Following the general election of 1987, a 'Campaign for a Scottish Assembly' (later Parliament) was formed and produced *A Claim of Right for Scotland* in July 1988. The report proposed the establishment of a Scottish Constitutional Convention, which was subsequently established and held its first meeting in March 1989. Membership of the Convention included representatives from the Scottish Labour Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, and the Campaign for a Scottish Parliament, and members of local government, churches, small political parties and civic organisations.⁶¹ During this meeting a Declaration

⁶¹ The Conservative Party was opposed to constitutional change and therefore did not join, and while initially involved, the Scottish National Party withdrew on the grounds that it supported a fully independent Scotland.

acknowledging the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine their own form of government was unanimously adopted.

The Convention also established working groups to prepare options for a future Scottish government, and, as a result of pressure from women's groups, these included a Women's Issues Group (WIG) which was chaired by the Labour MP and supporter of women's rights, Maria Fyfe. The interests of women were largely represented on the Convention by the Scottish Convention of Women (SCOW) (which as we saw above was established in 1977 in response to the UN year for Women, 1975). Despite SCOW's presence, women constituted only 10% of the total membership of the Convention. In response to this, and informed by the entrance of other women activists to the debate, a Woman's Claim of Right group was formed to monitor the work of the Convention and it submitted a *Woman's Claim of Right in Scotland* to the WIG. The Group was formed predominantly of Scottish Green Party women, but also women of other political parties, and women who were not formally involved in party politics. Following widespread consultation by the WIG with women across Scottish society, the Convention submitted its report *Towards Scotland's Parliament* in November 1990 containing a commitment to the principle of equal representation. Working groups were also established to undertake more detailed work on the Procedures and Preparations for Scottish Parliament and the Electoral System for Scottish Parliament.

The Women's Committee of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) proposed that there should be a statutory imposition on the political parties to select a man and a woman for each of Scotland's 72 constituencies, in order to ensure a gender balance in the Parliament. The scheme, which came to be known as the '50/50 option' was adopted by the Labour Party in Scotland at its March 1991 conference and endorsed by the STUC Congress in April the same year. Opposing any form of statutory restriction on selection and voting procedures, the Scottish Liberal Democrats proposed electoral change on the basis of 'STV-plus' to improve the representation of women (McDonald et al, 2001).

During this period, women were also actively engaged in organising conferences and events to stimulate debate about the issues within Scottish civic society more widely. In November 1990 a conference was held at the University of Edinburgh that aimed to broaden the debate 'beyond discussion of the methods for securing better representation of women as members of a Scottish Parliament, to explore the potential opportunity for women to play a more proactive role in the formulation

and implementation of policy' (Brown, 1996a, p. 12). In May 1991 the Women's Unit of Edinburgh District Council and Scotland on Sunday jointly hosted 'Women in Scotland: the Agenda for the Nineties'. The feminist research and campaigning organisation Engender was established as an outcome of this second conference. Engender was set up in 1992 as an organisation for women in Scotland which aimed to increase women's visibility, voice, representation and power in their own lives and that of their country and to meet the need for information, research, networking and policy development.⁶² Just before the 1992 general election, a third conference was organised in Glasgow under the heading *Changing the Face of Scottish Politics* to explore firstly how any new Parliament might operate, and secondly, the extent to which involving women in parliamentary processes would make a difference to policy outcomes.

Following the unanticipated re-election of the Conservative government in 1992, a recall of the *Changing the Face of Scotland's Politics* conference was organised in July to maintain momentum on the issue of women's representation. At that conference it was agreed a Women's Coordination Group should be established with representatives from the main women's groups in Scotland.⁶³ In 1993 the Constitutional Convention established a Scottish Constitutional Commission to examine issues left unresolved prior to the 1992 General Election. A sub-group of the Commission was established to invite submissions and evidence on the equal representation of women and the fair representation of ethnic minority groups and to report back to the Convention in November 1994.⁶⁴ The Commissions' report,⁶⁵ which rejected the statutory scheme of the 50/50 proposal, suggested instead a voluntary target of 40% plus representation in parliament to be reached by political parties in the first five years. Unhappy with this proposal, the Women's Coordination Group brought together Labour and Liberal Democrat women in search of an alternative. An Electoral Contract was drawn up for consideration by the two parties, who were asked to endorse the principle that there should be an

⁶² Engender newsletter 8, June 1995

⁶³ The SWCG was an umbrella organisation forming a loose alliance of women's organisations and individuals. It was administered by the STUC.

⁶⁴ Membership of the Commission was independent of the Convention. As of October 1994 the Commission had eleven members (including one observer from the Convention – Canon Kenyon Wright). The members backgrounds covered racial equality, academia, local government, business and the churches and included women activists. For a full list see http://www.almac.co.uk/business_park/scc/scc-rep.htm - Appendix three.

⁶⁵ Scottish Constitutional Commission (1994) *A Further Step: Towards a Scheme for Scotland's Parliament*. Edinburgh: CoSLA.

equal number of men and women in the first parliament. The Electoral Agreement was endorsed by the Convention and it produced its final report *Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right* on the 30th November 1995.

Designing the new Parliament

Following Labour's victory at the 1997 May General Election, the White paper *Scotland's Parliament* was produced in July. A Yes/Yes campaign was mounted by Forward Scotland⁶⁶ ahead of the referendum held on 11th September 1997, at which the electorate voted for both a Scottish Parliament, and for it to have tax varying powers.⁶⁷ Following the referendum result Labour produced its Scotland Bill in December. With devolution on its way, the Secretary of State for Scotland established a Consultative Steering Group (CSG) in November 1997 to

bring together views on and consider the operational needs and working methods of the Scottish Parliament. To develop proposals for the rules of procedure and Standing Orders which the Parliament might be invited to adopt. To prepare a report to the Secretary of State by the end of 1998, to inform the preparation of draft Standing Orders.

The CSGs remit made it a key moment for feminists; the importance of ensuring that the growing consensus on gender balance in representation was formally incorporated into the CSGs recommendations was well recognised. The presence of Morag Alexander (then Director EOC Scotland) on the Expert Panel of Procedures and Standing Orders in the Scottish Parliament, and of Dr Joan Stringer (now professor) on the Financial Issues Advisory Group (and also a member of the CSG) together with Professor Alice Brown's membership of the CSG created a core group of women committed to 'mainstreaming' equality issues into the work of the CSG.⁶⁸

The CSG met for the first time in January 1998. Its membership included representatives of all four major Scottish political parties, as well as of a wide range

⁶⁶ Forward Scotland was an umbrella organization set up to oversee a co—ordinated YES YES campaign for the referendum

⁶⁷ Turnout for the referendum was just over 60%. 74.3% in favour of a Scottish Parliament and 63.5% in favour of tax varying powers.

⁶⁸ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

of civic groups and interests. In addition, others with particular expertise were brought in to sit on expert panels and working groups.⁶⁹

The CSG members professed their aim to be

to try to capture, in the nuts and bolts of Parliamentary procedure, some of the high aspirations for a better, more responsive and more truly democratic system of government that have informed the movement for constitutional change in Scotland; and in submitting these proposals for debate, our hope is that the principles on which they have been based will continue to influence the life of Scotland's Parliament, not only in the letter of its Standing Orders, but in the spirit of its work.

The groups' work was thus clearly framed by the principles of democracy and participation which had underlain the campaign thus far. The members of the Group recognised the particular political opportunity their remit afforded to set the frame in which the new Parliament would operate, as is evidenced by the statement above. They encapsulated the components of this frame in four key principles adopted to guide their work, which have since been adopted by the Scottish Parliament. They are that:

- the Scottish Parliament should embody and reflect the sharing of power between the people of Scotland, the legislators and the Scottish Executive;
- the Scottish Executive should be accountable to the Scottish Parliament and the Parliament and Executive should be accountable to the people of Scotland;
- the Scottish Parliament should be accessible, open, responsive, and develop procedures which make possible a participative approach to the development, consideration and scrutiny of policy and legislation;
- the Scottish Parliament in its operation and its appointments should recognise the need to promote equal opportunities for all.⁷⁰

On the fourth key principle, the group recommended that '[e]qual opportunities should be mainstreamed into the work of the Parliament, and through the demands

⁶⁹ In addition to the two groups mentioned above, the CSG also established an *Expert Panel on Information and Communication Technologies*, a *Code of Conduct Working Group*, and a *Media Issues Expert Panel*.

⁷⁰ CSG, 1998, p. 3

of and scrutiny by the Parliament, into the work of the Executive.⁷¹ The group referred to the EOC definition of mainstreaming as 'the integration of equal opportunities into all policy development, legislation, implementation, evaluation and review practices.'⁷² In relation to the work of Parliamentary committees, the group considered whether they could reasonably be expected to mainstream equal opportunities considerations in all their work, or whether a further mechanism was needed to ensure that such mainstreaming is delivered. They recommended that there should be an Equal Opportunities Committee and that an Equality Unit should also be established to provide a focus for these efforts: '[t]he aim should be to achieve effective mainstreaming.'⁷³ The CSG's report therefore not only represented a pivotal moment for embedding the principle of equality in discussion of the design and operation of the new parliament, but also secured the position of mainstreaming as the mechanism by which the second strand of the women's agenda, that of creating an institutionalised voice for women, would be met.

The Group made specific recommendations on the form and role that the proposed policy machinery should take. They envisaged the role of the Equal Opportunities Committee as a catalyst to ensure that, for instance, equality plans and targets were outlined for each Committee and effective monitoring systems put in place by Committees. It was intended that this would ensure a proper focus on equality issues during the early years of the Parliament's life while MSPs and officials developed the skills and expertise necessary for effective mainstreaming. To ensure the effectiveness of mainstreaming it was thought necessary for all MSPs and officials to receive training on equal opportunities with the emphasis on policy appraisal. Further, the Equal Opportunities Committee was seen as having a crucial role to play in ensuring that the Parliament began operating in a way that would enable it to comply with the fourth principle.

The CSG's advice in this area was informed by submissions from the STUC and EOC (Scotland). The latter related specifically to mainstreaming and was reproduced as annex H of the CSG report. The EOC believed that the establishment of a Scottish Parliament with law-making powers was a unique opportunity to address the issues of equality of opportunity from the outset of a new institution. 'The aim must be to embed into the process of policy formulation and the way in

⁷¹ CSG, 1998, p. 12 (47)

⁷² CSG, 1998, p. 12 (47)

⁷³ CSG, 1998, p. 12 (48)

which the Parliament works, the principles and commitment to promote equal opportunities for all and to eliminate the effects of past discrimination.⁷⁴ The proposals outlined in the paper were written so as to be flexible enough to incorporate a broader definition of equality of opportunity than solely gender equality.

Discussion of the decision that both the Committee and Unit with responsibility for equality issues should be generic equal opportunities initiatives rather than specifically women-focussed appears to have been conducted largely within feminist circles where 'there was political discussion about the tactics on some of it'.⁷⁵ The apparent acceptance on the part of women activists that either a women's unit or a gender mainstreaming strategy was not viable was in stark contrast to the heated debate about the move from women's committees to equal opportunities committees at local government level (Engender, 1991, p. 41). One interviewee reported 'that there was genuine concern that the woman's agenda would get diluted because there would be other priorities in terms of race and so on' but couldn't remember if a request for a woman's unit had been made at any stage.⁷⁶ Another source suggested that the request for specific gender equality machinery was dropped as a form of political bargaining to ensure that commitment to equality was maintained, and to avoid possible divisions.⁷⁷ The sense of bargain was supported by the first interviewee who commented 'people started to soften on something being called women, and would go with equality, not equal opportunities, it sounded too liberal, but equality was better, as long as it was made very explicit that wasn't about diluting the gender agenda, and I think it was always going to be a tough thing to balance.'⁷⁸

Despite the concern that the gender agenda should not be diluted in a generic approach, there does not appear to have been much discussion as to how issues of intersectionality would be addressed, or how a generic agenda would be taken forward, though the question was later raised by others (Mackay and Bilton, 2000, Squires, undated). Two possible explanations for this (and there are likely others) are firstly that feminists are so aware of the diversity of women and women's needs

⁷⁴ CSG, 1998, Annex H, p. 146

⁷⁵ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

⁷⁶ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

⁷⁷ Interview 25 (11-05-04)

⁷⁸ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

and the importance of thinking about the ways in which structures of race, gender, disability, class etc interact that they did not raise it as a specific issue, and secondly, that the lack of focus on the administrative arm of government reduced opportunities for discussing issues of implementation with regard to equality strategies. The politics of 'difference' also suggested that, to some extent, securing a place for women in the new institutions would also increase women's voice, though as we see in chapter seven, this has proved particularly problematic with regard to the bureaucracy.

The Civil Service and Women's Pursuit of Voice

While the campaign for constitutional change brought a renewed interest in issues of institutional design, the focus of this interest was almost exclusively on the legislature at the expense of questions of administration (Pyper, 1999). There was enthusiasm for transferring the CSG agenda from the parliament to the administration (Parry and Jones, 2000). Not ignoring existing differentiation between Whitehall and the Scottish Office, there was a large amount of carryover from The Scottish Office to the new Scottish Executive at devolution, partly due to the fact that little attention was paid to the impact of devolution upon the civil service in Scotland prior to devolution (Pyper, 1999). Parry (1999) has noted the significance of retaining the Corporate design of the Scottish Office letter heads and compliment slips which remain much the same, with 'Scottish Executive' fitting the same space as 'The Scottish Office'. The members of the Scottish Executive remain part of the Home Civil Service and are thus tied into UK personnel and management structures (Parry, 2000, p.85). The initial need to provide stability during the handover period and the continuing concern with becoming a proper government, and thus mirroring Whitehall procedures, have both militated against significant change (Parry and Jones, 2000; Parry, 2005).

Given the lack of expertise within the Scottish Office, and the difficulties noted in communications between the Office and women's organisations, the extent of carryover would suggest that there may be difficulties in embedding an equalities perspective into the work of the organisation. As discussed below, the Executive has brought in outside expertise on equalities issues, set targets for the recruitment of women and people from ethnic minorities into the Civil Service and is increasingly encouraging of applications from external candidates. Despite these changes officials remain part of the 'civil service club' (Parry, 2002a, p. 317) and as chapter

six demonstrates, the extent to which the Executive still represents a 'different world' creates a barrier to the effective implementation of mainstreaming.

The lack of attention by feminists to issues of civil service culture and operation can be explained by three factors: the amount of energy that went into issues of parliamentary design and campaigning for equal representation in the parliament; the desire of the Civil Service to keep sole control of matters relating to administration; and the desire on the behalf of the Civil Service to keep politics out of questions of administration. As one interviewee commented,

the political campaign was so much focussed on the institution of a parliament, and then the debate centred around numbers of people, electoral system, how the parties would agree that, because they were concerned about ... obviously being elected to this parliament, so it focussed so much on all of that, that actually very few people asked the question, and what about the Civil Service⁷⁹

Once decision was made by the Civil Service unions that they would remain part of the British home civil service, there was an 'implicit, okay, the Convention won't get into a lot of that because ... if that's what the unions want we'll go with that.'⁸⁰

As well as the amount of energy put into issues regarding the parliament, a lack of understanding of the role of the parliament and administration was also an issue, with the effect that discussion of parliamentary matters was often seen as relating to wider issues of institutionalisation, 'that confusion in people's mind that parliament in a sense encompassed everything, and actually failing to appreciate that. That the words were used wrongly and interchangeably often demonstrates that'.⁸¹ Where CSG members did try to ask about the role of the Civil Service they were informed it was not their concern: '[b]ut to be fair, within the CSG we also raised it a bit in terms of, 'well what's going, we're saying all this procedure for parliament, but how's it going to interact with the Executive' ... and we were told very firmly that that was not our remit'.⁸² Brown (2000, p. 542) has argued that '[i]n exploring the process of making the Scottish Parliament, the technical cannot be divorced from the political' yet it appears that in respect to the role of the Civil Service, this was done quite successfully.

⁷⁹ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

⁸⁰ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

⁸¹ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

⁸² Interview 17 (11-12-03)

The lack of debate specifically on the administration, and discussion of the issues raised by the values and cultures of this institution for the project of instilling a new politics in Scotland, can be seen as a missed opportunity. The extent of carryover from the Scottish Office noted above, and the fact that existing interaction between women's organisations and the Office was characterised by a lack of understanding, knowledge and shared perspective (discussed below), suggests that developing a 'new politics' approach within the administration might be a source of conflict.⁸³

The issue was not totally neglected, as evidenced by a conference on *Scotland's Parliament and the Civil Service* jointly hosted by Charter 88 and the John Wheatley Centre in 1996. A report of the conference written for Engender rather tellingly begins with the statement that 'this conference wasn't as dry as it might sound!'.⁸⁴ The short report relays some of the contextual information – that there are 40,000 civil servants employed in Scotland, and about 20 percent of civil servants are sub-contracted to quangos – and then puts key questions that were raised during the conference: 'What are their prospects in relation to a Scottish Parliament? What will happen after the coming of a Scottish Parliament? Will civil servants be accountable to a Scottish Parliament on, for example, health and education? And to Westminster for, say, social security? And even assuming a 50:50 political gender balance, won't a Bill of Rights and more dynamic and representative Select committees also be needed to ensure openness and relevance?'.

There were also some attempts by women's organisations to bring the ideas informing the design of the new parliament to bear upon the administration:

the STUC and the Women's Co-ordination Group ... tried to inject the politics of issues affecting women into the discussions with the Scottish Office. Separately, the STUC and the Women's Co-ordination Group developed a case for the establishment of a Scottish Women's Council, to be funded by government, and whose purpose would be to give women access to government and government access to views of women. This process was important in opening up a dialogue within the Scottish Office and within the civil service, and was the forerunner to the establishment of an informal women's advisory group to the Labour Minister for Women's Issues, to the creation of the Women in

⁸³ In an analysis of perceptions amongst civil society, officials and politicians in Scotland, Sloat (2002, p. 112) finds differing understandings of 'governance' between the three groups. Significantly for this argument, she notes that officials were often sceptical of civic society's desire for participatory democracy and suggests that this scepticism may be a serious obstacle to reform.

⁸⁴ Hamilton, Engender Newsletter 13, February 1997, p.10

As McDonald et al. suggest, these interactions between women's organisations and the Scottish Office were an important precursor for the development of mechanisms to institutionalise women's voice in policy and decision-making processes. Initially, however, these attempts were characterised by frustration, misunderstanding and miscommunication, due in large part to a lack of expertise and knowledge within the Scottish Office of gender politics and women's issues and, within women's organisations, of the workings of the civil service.

Communicating between different worlds

Driving much of the dialogue between women's organisations and the Scottish Office was the UN's Beijing conference. The Women's Coordination Group used the Beijing conference as an opportunity to consult women in Scotland on their priorities for an unofficial *Scottish Women's Report* which was to be sent to the UK Beijing delegation. Unlike the official UK report, this unofficial report was based on extensive consultation with women and women's groups in Scotland (McDonald et al, 2001, p. 235) and therefore, they argued, commanded greater legitimacy. The report came to be seen as an agenda for action from Scottish women,⁸⁶ and later formed the basis of Engender's priorities.

In addition, women's organisations in Scotland lobbied the Scottish Office for meetings and access to ministers in the run up to and aftermath of Beijing. In 1994, Scottish Office minister Lord James Douglas Hamilton was given political responsibility for women's issues alongside his portfolio as minister for Home Affairs and the Environment. At the same time, responsibility within the civil service (Scotland) was given to a member of the management group working in the Criminal Justice Department. The decision to specify women's issues as a separate area in the Scottish Office for what seems to be the first time was influenced both by the upcoming Beijing conference, and by the importance attached to women's issues at UK level (see chapter three). According to civil servants, the existence since 1992

⁸⁵ In fact the idea of a Scottish Women's council was not universally supported by the WCG members, it was regarded as a very traditional hierarchical 'peak' organisations, rather like the WNC.

⁸⁶ Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

of a Cabinet minister with responsibility for women's issues in Westminster was seen as one of the key reasons the posts were created in Scotland.⁸⁷

Using interview data and the newsletter archives of Engender, the following develops a picture of relations between women's organisations and the Scottish Office, which suggests that issues of civil service culture and working style were likely to be a potential barrier to the development of a 'new politics' following devolution. This is not to say, however, that there was no will to create such a dialogue.

In April 1995, the STUC women's committee, EOC, SWCG and other women's organisations had been invited to take part in meetings at the Scottish Office to meet representatives of the UK government delegation to Beijing.⁸⁸ Writing for Engender, Kath Davies concludes that a positive outcome of the meeting was the response by the Scottish Office to discussion about closer links between the Office and women's organisations. The Scottish Office was 'willing to call further meetings if asked, and to be involved in post-Beijing meetings – possibly in several locations in Scotland.'⁸⁹ Despite this statement of good intent, in practice the extent to which the two groups came from 'different worlds' hampered communication.⁹⁰ At a debriefing session held for Scottish NGOs following the Beijing Conference in December 1995, attended by two Scottish Office officials, one official from the Sex Equality Branch of the Department of Education and Employment, representatives of women's organisations, and chaired by Morag Alexander, Director EOC (Scotland), the extent of this problem became clear. Forsyth's account of the event, written for the Engender newsletter, creates a picture of the meeting of two quite different worlds. She writes 'five minutes into the meeting it felt indeed like some sort of encounter with aliens who had little experience of the issues facing mortals in Scotland.'⁹¹ The lack of any shared appreciative system (Vickers, 1965) made communication almost impossible.

⁸⁷ Interview 20 (19–12–03)

⁸⁸ Janet Whitaker was the representative of the UK government who came to Scotland, a civil servant who headed the Employment Department's Sex Equality Branch.

⁸⁹ Davies, Engender Newsletter 8, June 1995, p. 5

⁹⁰ Despite this meeting, and demands from SJAG and others, no representative of the Scottish Office was present on the UK delegation to Beijing. Further, the *Scottish Report*, the result of the consultation by the SWCG, was not in the hands of the UK delegation at Beijing, despite having been presented to Ministers in good time. Nine women from Scotland attended the Conference but were not part of the official UK delegation, most were self-funded.

⁹¹ Forsyth, Engender Newsletter 10, March 1996

At a practical level, the 'main cause of frustration was the lack of any Government minister to whom we might address any questions.' Women present repeatedly raised the 'poor communication between the Scottish Office and women's organisations' and suggested that this cast doubt on the Government's ability to deliver on any of its Beijing commitments. Forsyth concludes 'the level of Scottish Office interest in gender issues can be gauged by its resource commitment – i.e. one part of the job of one civil servant who is obviously unfamiliar with the many organisations representing women's issues in Scotland'.⁹²

Despite the difficulties of conversing across space, communication was still seen as the essential basis of further work. Women needed to have a voice, and this voice needed to include women in their diversity. Lorna Alquist of SJAG pressed for 'a simple, consultative conference where Scottish Office ministers and officials could communicate directly with a far greater number of women, and hear their views'.⁹³

While key civil servants were in time to become very committed to the issues of women's representation, and to work energetically on establishing greater dialogue, they were initially far more sceptical. For many top civil servants, women's issues no longer appeared a pressing subject and making a 'special case' for women was seen as condescending. Key officials within the Scottish Office were initially quite resistant to work on women's issues, not liking the idea of women's issues being a special case even to the extent that it was difficult to accept that there were any specifically 'women's issues'.⁹⁴ The lack of women with expertise in gender and other equality issues within the administration is noted as a barrier to work on equality as for career civil servants 'the need to grasp an equalities perspective has too often been both challenging and novel' (Breitenbach, 2004).

Beginning to find common ground

Women's organisations responded to the scepticism of civil servants and their lack of knowledge in the area by focussing on establishing better and more frequent forms of dialogue. As we shall see, this request was rather ironically taken by

⁹² Forsyth, Engender Newsletter 10, March 1996

⁹³ Forsyth, Engender Newsletter 10, March 1996

⁹⁴ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

officials to mean that the women 'really just wanted to talk',⁹⁵ when for the women present communication was seen as a necessary, but first stage, towards action on a well articulated agenda — set out in the *Scottish Women's Report* to Beijing. A series of meetings were held between 1995 and 1996, all prompted by the Beijing conference, and accounts of these meetings were again written for the Engender newsletter. It has been difficult to trace written records from other sources, but an interview with a key official gives some indication of how the meetings were perceived within the Scottish Office.

Members of the Scottish Office experienced a 'turning point' in relations with women's organisations during a meeting in 1996 attended by the then Minister with responsibility for women's issues, Lord James Douglas Hamilton. The meeting took place in April at St Andrews House in Edinburgh. Discussion during the meeting centred on the type of communication desired by women's organisations, and some advance in understanding was made.⁹⁶ The meeting resulted in an undertaking to have annual progress meetings between Scottish Office and women's organisations, although no specific budget was set aside for this.⁹⁷ Scottish Office officials present saw the meeting as influential in changing the attitudes of women's NGOs to government and of officials to women's NGOs. Further, as an event, it demonstrated to officials the need for 'women's issues' work and the possibility for constructive engagement between the Scottish Office and women's NGOs in this area.⁹⁸ It signalled a move towards a positive discussion between the parties involved, rather than the previous characteristically reactive defence on the part of officials to demands they often did not have the power to meet (many relevant areas being the preserve of Whitehall).

From the perspective of the women's organisations, while there 'did seem to be a willingness to find some common ground for progress', officials from Scottish Office departments 'seemed to have little appreciation of the background and purpose of the meeting' despite indication of questions and topics for discussion

⁹⁵ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

⁹⁶ Davies reports that there was considerable discussion of the type of contact NGOs wanted to establish and maintain with the Scottish Office, and that many women expressed the feeling that an annual meeting was not adequate. There were requests for Task Forces of NGO representatives and departmental officials, relating to each department, to work together on identifying needs. Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

⁹⁷ Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

⁹⁸ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

having been sent to the Office prior to the event.⁹⁹ Further, rather than a relaxation of the defensive position, Davies found that 'one of the most important barriers we have to break through is the curious defensiveness of government and civil service.'¹⁰⁰ The two parties to the discussions held conflicting perceptions of what it was that women's organisations were requesting. While one official reported that, through the meeting, civil servants developed a realisation that 'they didn't need to be 'action men' all the time, and that being listeners could be just as important',¹⁰¹ Davies summarises women's demands 'as the need for a mechanism to translate principles into action'. Ironically, officials' developing understanding of women's issues, and their increasing sympathy for them, appears to have been based on continuing miscommunication.¹⁰²

According to Davies, the officials wanted to focus on 'what and how' and the purpose of further meetings, rather than on overarching aims of 'changing the world' (which they would no doubt have seen as not in their powers and as an inappropriate cause for civil servants), while, on the NGO side it was pointed out that meetings and close contact were needed precisely to work out the 'how' rather than the 'what'.¹⁰³ Davies finishes her report by saying '[t]he working document, the changes we want to see (which clearly hardly any official had set eyes on) already exists. It is the Scottish Report to which so many women in Scotland contributed before the Beijing conference. The Scottish Report is set firmly within the principles of the Global Platform for Action.' Women's organisations did not understand the need to continually reframe their demands in order to meet the requirements of civil service working cultures.

It is clear from the above that preparations for and dissemination from Beijing were key to bringing about increased dialogue between women's organisations and officials and ministers within the Scottish Office. This was also a route of diffusion for the mainstreaming strategy. At the meeting in April 1996, Lord James Douglas Hamilton had explicitly referred to 'mainstreaming' gender issues as government policy, and had stated that all policy proposals would be examined at every stage for their gender impact, and that guidance on policy appraisal would be produced

⁹⁹ Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

¹⁰⁰ Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

¹⁰¹ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

¹⁰² Davies, Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

¹⁰³ Davies Engender Newsletter 11, June 1996

for all government departments 'soon'. He had also stated his 'commitment to the Global Platform and its implementation' and that he was 'eager to ensure that the Scottish Office [would] play its part in implementing it'. The key issues which these meetings established were the need for better dialogue, and underlying this, the need to develop knowledge on both sides. The next section describes the development of machinery for women in Scotland following the labour victory at the 1997 general election, understanding this as attempts to address this knowledge deficit.

Institutionalising knowledge – elite and ordinary voices

External pressure from women's organisations and growing recognition of the need to increase knowledge relating to women's issues within the Scottish Office led to the creation of an informal advisory group on women's issues, and later, to a consultative forum for women. Despite the extensive political debates on women's representation conducted within civic society, in political parties, and in the bodies set up to consider how devolution would operate, these measures to institutionalise women's voice were both ad hoc and post hoc.

Shortly before the 1997 election, Lord James Douglas Hamilton had asked one of his top civil servants to bring together a small group of women to provide advice on women's issues,¹⁰⁴ and members of the Women's Coordination Group were subsequently brought in to perform this function. Thus when Henry McLeish took over responsibilities in 1997 (see below) there was already an informed group of women able to provide expertise, a situation seen by one observer as 'absolutely crucial', 'it was very important to ensure that this group was able to continue to work at a ministerial level' following the election.¹⁰⁵

Following the 1997 general election, developments in Scotland seemed to parallel those at UK level (see chapter 3) both in terms of the kind of policy machinery set up, and in the manner in which appointments were made. Following the election, the lack of an announcement on who would be the Minister for Women was noted, in contrast to the announcement of other ministerial responsibilities including that of a Minister for Children. Mackay, writing for Engender, relates in comical form

¹⁰⁴ Interview 21 (13-12-01)

¹⁰⁵ Interview 21 (13-12-01)

the difficulties she had in determining who held the post. Inquiries to Party Headquarters at Keir Hardie House did not provide any answers, and initially inquiries to the information desk at the Scottish Office were no more fruitful, in fact they reported that women's affairs was not part of any written remit for the new ministers. A call to another Scottish Office department brought the news that as yet no minister had been given the remit, but that an announcement would be made soon. A call from that department later brought the news that Henry McLeish (already Minister for Home Affairs and Devolution) was also responsible for women's issues. The confusion continued however, as press office were unable to give details about the minister's agenda, not knowing about the job. From initial inquiry to confirmation that McLeish was Minister for Women spanned a period of three days. The confirmation came with the comment that there had been no announcement regarding the post as it should have been 'taken as assumed' that McLeish's post would include responsibility for women's issues.¹⁰⁶ It appears that this was not obvious to McLeish however, who is reported to have 'suddenly discovered' that he was minister for women;¹⁰⁷ McLeish's appointment seemed to epitomise the lack of expertise on and physical presence of women within the Scottish Office.

Critics of these developments expressed dismay both that women's issues were not considered important enough to require a full post and that there was no Ministry for Women: 'first of all we were going to get a ministry for women, then we were going to get a minister for women, and what we have got is a minister for women and devolution and home affairs'.¹⁰⁸ The fact that it had been necessary to give the post to a male minister – there were no women in the first ministerial group after the 1997 election — also drew criticism.

It later emerged that Malcolm Chisholm was to be the representative on the Cabinet sub-committee on women's issues and to support McLeish in his duties. It is not clear to what extent Chisholm was formally given responsibility for women's issues as junior minister, and his appearance at events drew criticism from some women's organisations as it was perceived to be a shunting of responsibilities to a junior

¹⁰⁶ Mackay, Engender Newsletter 14, June 1997, p.4

¹⁰⁷ Interview 20 (19–12–03)

¹⁰⁸ Louise Carlin (Zero Tolerance campaign) in *The Scotsman*, June 9, 1997.

minister. Whether this was true or not, Chisholm was a committed feminist and attended several conferences on women's issues.¹⁰⁹

Building Expertise

While 18 years of Conservative rule had not resulted in the dismantling of the existing equality commissions (the EOC and WNC), and had even included amendments and new legislation in the form of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act, there had not been an active promotion of gender equality. Such developments as there were tended to be a result of exogenous pressure both from the UN as discussed earlier and from the EU through for example the European Court of Justice and various directives on equality (see, for example, Hoskyns, 1996; Mazey, 1998). Within the Scottish Office, there had been even less development of expertise on gender than at UK level. When McLeish took up post in 1997 it was recognised that expertise from outside would need to be brought in and work commenced on developing institutionalised routes for both 'elite' and 'ordinary' voices. According to one commentator, 'there was effectively nobody there who had developed any in-depth expertise on gender equality issues as a result of their job remit, though there may have been some individuals who brought this with them from elsewhere.'¹¹⁰ The situation is echoed by Helen Fawcett's findings with regard to social exclusion/inclusion, she finds that '[t]he old Scottish Office had no experience or traditions in this area of policy-making ... It was immediately apparent that in the context of the new institutional structure both civil servants and ministers needed access to advice and expert knowledge on the issues as they relate to Scotland' (Fawcett, 2003, p. 444). The specific difficulties of capacity for equality policy making were set within a lack of policy making capacity more generally (Parry, 2002a).

Henry McLeish's first public duty as Minister for Women was as the key speaker at a conference on women's issues organised by members of the Women's Coordination Group shortly after the 1997 election. He is reported to have been quite nervous 'about speaking to a whole room of women'. Malcolm Chisholm also attended the conference, and while McLeish left following his opening speech,

¹⁰⁹ Chisholm resigned from his ministerial post following cuts to One Parent Benefits in December 1997.

¹¹⁰ Breitenbach, Notes for seminar presentation on 'Gender Equality Strategies in the Scottish Executive and Whitehall', Department of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh, March 2003.

Chisholm stayed for the whole day. Brown, Strachan and MacDonald prepared a document for the conference suggesting that McLeish should establish dialogue bilaterals with different women's organisations and with different groups who were promoting issues close to the women's agenda. The paper also began to talk explicitly about an equality agenda being mainstreamed throughout the parliament, processes and procedures, 'we started to articulate [the mainstreaming agenda] a lot more through that document, and how it wasn't just a question of representation but it was a question of having an equality agenda, and that equality agenda had not to be confined just to specialists but there being mainstreaming throughout the whole processes of the parliament, and the procedures, and in the policies'.¹¹¹

Following this conference, the informal group brought together to advise Lord James was more formally established as the Women's Advisory Group (WAG), (dubbed by some as the New Advisory Group (NAG)), its membership consisting of women who had held key positions in the campaign for gender balance in the new parliament, and who had strong links with women's organisations — Alice Brown (member CSG, professor politics at Edinburgh University), Yvonne Strachan (TGWU, member STUC women's committee), Ronnie McDonald (convenor of WCG) and Morag Alexander (Director EOC Scotland, member CSG expert panel on procedures and standing orders, author mainstreaming annex). WAG continued to function as a 'very informal advisory group' to McLeish and was also used and found to be very helpful by civil servants.¹¹²

Following the 1997 election, work on women's issues focussed on setting up a mechanism for consultation with women. This was evidence of a recognition of the need to give women greater access to, and involvement in, government and also of the need to supplement the Scottish Office's low level of knowledge on gender issues. The consultative forum would supplement the WAG's elite input with the voices of a greater number and diversity of women. To this end, Henry McLeish launched a consultation paper 'Reaching women in Scotland', which outlined proposals for a 'Women in Scotland Consultative Forum'.

The intention to set up such a forum was well received by women's organisations, though there were some criticisms of the initial proposals. Kelly (1997) praises the idea of a Consultative Forum as a 'very significant development' and states that

¹¹¹ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

¹¹² Interview 20 (19-12-03)

'Reaching Women in Scotland' is 'an enterprising and hopeful initiative'. She does however have several concerns with the way the plans for the Forum are set out, in particular over the traditional structure of WISCF, the lack of understanding of and provision for ensuring the contributions of the diversity of Scottish women, a tendency to see women as passive subjects rather than principal players, the lack of mention of the role of local government, and the exclusionary implications of all the above (1997).

Following the 'Reaching Women in Scotland' consultation, a post of Women's Issues Research Consultant (WIRC) was created within the Scottish Office, and in April 1998 Esther Breitenbach was appointed to the post. Seconded from her post as Teaching Fellow in the Social Policy department of the University of Edinburgh, Breitenbach's appointment, though part of a trend towards bringing new blood into the civil service, was still unusual in bringing outside expertise, particularly in the area of equality. Her contacts with women's organisations in Scotland, formed both through academic work and activism, were hugely beneficial in developing contact between the Scottish Office and women's NGOs. The main responsibilities of the post were to develop a database of women's organisations in Scotland, to facilitate the development of the Women in Scotland Consultative Forum, and to develop a research agenda on women's issues. The post was the first full-time post on women's issues within the Scottish Office and was the result of the successful arguments of activists that expertise in government was essential for the development of policies on and consultation with women's groups.¹¹³ The Research Consultant was supported in her work by a Women's Issues Research Advisory Group (WIRAG) established in August 1999.¹¹⁴ The Group aimed to promote gender sensitive research, to provide a focus for research networks, to assist in mapping research on women's issues in Scotland, and to raise public awareness of existing research. Thus by the time devolution was enacted, mechanisms to institutionalise women's voice had been initiated, and the mainstreaming strategy identified as a possible way of strengthening these developments and thereby, of putting into practice the second strand of strategy of women's representation.

¹¹³ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

¹¹⁴ WIRAG was effectively a self-nominated group from organisations who attended the WISCF, with one or two others invited for their particular expertise. It included academics, a representative from the EOC, trade unionists, voluntary sector representatives, and representatives of professional women's organisations.

Notwithstanding the significant amount of carryover from the Scottish Office to the Scottish Executive at devolution (see page 99 above), devolution did bring both new bodies and new structures to the administrative arm of Scottish government and significantly increased the possibilities for developing a mainstreaming strategy. An Equality Unit was established within the Scottish Executive, as recommended by the CSG, in the autumn of 1999 with a remit to support Ministers in taking forward on equality issues and to work with departments on mainstreaming equality into policies and programmes. The Unit was initially located in the centre of government within Cabinet Secretariat and had a staff of six. The appointment of Yvonne Strachan to head up the Unit was unusual both in being an external appointment to the Senior Civil Service based on open competition and in bringing in someone with specific expertise in equality issues. It was also statistically unusual to recruit a woman: as at July 1999 women comprised just over 18% (29 of 157) Senior Civil Servants within the Executive.¹¹⁵ Appointing a man to head the new Equality Unit would, however, have been likely to attract significant criticism from women's organisations. As demonstrated in chapter five, Strachan had strong links with women's networks and organisations. While an outsider to the Scottish Executive, she had been a strategic player during the devolution campaign. Strachan brought to the Executive an understanding of the complexities of pursuing an equalities agenda through government and of current debates around mainstreaming. Her appointment, as with that of Breitenbach as WIRC, provided new avenues of access for women's organisations to government and signalled a recognition of the importance of equalities expertise. Apart from the appointment of Strachan (and Breitenbach in a consultancy post) the Unit was staffed through internal recruitment and while candidates were expected to have an interest in equalities issues specific expertise in this area was not a requirement. When set up all six members of staff were female and though it later had a mixed composition, women still held the majority of posts. In November 2002 eleven out of the fourteen members of staff were female and three of the four branch heads were female. In comparison 37% (163 of 441) of staff at this level in the Executive as a whole were female.¹¹⁶ In January 2003 at least twelve of the seventeen staff were female.

The Executive's approach to equality had two parallel strands: firstly the development of the Equality Unit and an Equality Strategy focussed on equality

¹¹⁵ Figures supplied by the Scottish Executive Human Resources Statistics branch.

¹¹⁶ Figures supplied by the Scottish Executive Human Resources Statistics branch.

issues in the policy work of the Executive; and secondly, the development of an Equal Opportunities Unit Diversity Strategy focussed on equality issues in human resources. Following devolution the Scottish Executive made commitments to increase the diversity of its staff and target the under-representation of women, disabled people and ethnic minority communities. A Diversity Working Group was established to assist the Executive in drawing up a 5-year Diversity Strategy and Action Plan. The Executive’s Diversity Strategy *Positive about You* was published in November 2000 including targets to increase representation for these groups by 2005 (see table 1). Close links were drawn between the Equality and Diversity Strategies, with the Equality Strategy stating that the “diversity strategy will complement the Equality Strategy and in part aims to ensure that staff in the Executive are better equipped to meet the challenges of the Equality Strategy.” (Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 24). The Diversity Working Group stated that the ‘focus in the early years is on increasing at all levels in the organisation, the numbers in the main under represented groups – women, people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities’ (Scottish Executive, 2000c, p. 1).

Table 1: Diversity Targets for the Scottish Executive

Grade	Women (%)			Ethnic minorities (%)			Disability (%)		
	Apr 98	Aug 00	Apr 05	Apr 98	Aug 00	Apr 05	Apr 98	Aug 00	Apr 05
All SCS	15.8	20.6	30.0	*	*	1.7	*	*	1.8
Band C	25.3	31.2	43.0	*	*	1.7	1.1	1.1	1.4
Band B	36.3	39.8	48.0	0.3	0.5	1.7	1.5	1.9	3.2
Band A	No target set			0.7	0.7	1.7	3.3	3.4	5.0

*information not publicly available to preserve confidentiality
(Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 24).

As we saw above, the first commitments to a mainstreaming approach in Scotland, made by Lord James Douglas Hamilton, came as a result of the UN’s conference in Beijing. This commitment was subsequently picked up by the members of the Women’s Advisory Group as a way of taking forward the agenda of women’s representation and later developed further in the EOC’s annex to the report of the

Consultative Steering Group. In both cases, the connections of the women involved, through European and international feminist networks, would have been important in exposing them to the mainstreaming strategy (see chapter five for a discussion of these links).

There are two significant points to note in this process. Firstly, unlike the very widespread and sustained debate on issues of political representation as place, mainstreaming appears to have received almost no discussion or debate amongst women's organisations or within political parties, other than within the group of women who proposed it, and only limited discussion within the CSG.¹¹⁷ The extent to which it was simply accepted as 'common sense' is striking. Secondly, the point of internalisation of the mainstreaming strategy in Scotland – through the CSG annex – embedded it firmly within a discourse of democracy, participation and representation which was significantly different from that in the UK. At the same time, the form of an annex meant that mainstreaming could be taken en bloc, rather than translated and internalised into the Scottish context. The process of internalisation and translation was subsequently carried out through several documents written by feminist academics and through the Scottish Executive's *Equality Strategy* (see chapter five). In the last section of the present chapter, we explore the implications of the context of the adoption of mainstreaming and how these factors affect the potential for developing a more radical approach than at UK level. Mainstreaming was adopted within a split context. While, as many have noted, devolution created a positive environment for participatory framings of the strategy, the lack of understanding and knowledge within the civil service, and the culture of civil service working, remained a potential source of constraint. The comparative lack of attention given to the role of the civil service combined with the under-interrogation of the mainstreaming strategy meant that the potential conflict between these had not been discussed.

The Common Sense Frame

At a UK level, one of the key criticisms made of New Labour's politics has been its emphasis on consensus and the way in which this effectively bars certain interests from political debate (see chapter 3). At a Scottish level, the extent of political consensus around the values and ideals of a Scottish Parliament, and the central

¹¹⁷ Interview 17 (11–12–03)

place of gender equality within those, has been hailed as an achievement. The extent of this consensus and the broad base of the campaign has meant that it has been 'difficult for party members to criticise the campaign for women's representation without criticising fellow members and the rhetoric (and in some cases policies) of their parties' (Brown et al, 2002, p. 81). Those involved in the campaign have suggested that the argument for gender equality in representation was successful 'because it was very, very convincing – and irrefutable' (Engender, 1999, p. 51).¹¹⁸ Where individuals may have disagreed, they kept silent on the issue. According to one male Labour Party member, opposition was in fact widespread within the party amongst male members, but none would voice this in public (Engender, 1999).

The level of consensus reached, and the strength of the argument made, were the result of the strategic framing of gender representation by women activists as an indispensable aspect of democratic politics. This was a conscious strategy on the part of women who 'constantly intervened' in the process to make their case, 'they used the language of democracy, participation and representation to stake a claim on behalf of women' (Engender, 1999, p. 23). 'We knew we had to get the gender debate up the political agenda, and we knew we had to link it with, people were arguing for democracy in a new system and a modern forward looking parliament, part of that whole vision had to include an equal, had to be an equal one, so representation seemed to be part of the means to that end'.¹¹⁹

On the back of this consensus regarding equal gender representation, mainstreaming was also accepted as a logical approach to furthering the aims of devolution, 'I can't remember a forceful lobby against. It was almost seen as the common sense thing at one level'.¹²⁰ This uncritical acceptance of the strategy, explains, at least in part, the lack of debate and discussion the strategy received at this point. Combined with the lack of knowledge about, and interest in, gender and equality issues it also worked to disguise possible resistance to the strategy:

It doesn't mean to say that people were necessarily supportive or that they would prioritise it, and therefore you might get opposition but it's much more latent, or its not opposition in the sense that people are opposed but just that they don't prioritise it or don't see it as significant, it's almost like 'oh yeah that seems like a good thing or

¹¹⁸ Quote from 'Keeping Gender on the Agenda: participative democracy and gender equality in the Scottish Parliament' Engender, 1999, no interview references given

¹¹⁹ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

¹²⁰ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

common sense thing', but whether or not they then internalise it and change their view of what they're doing as a result, is a much more difficult thing to judge.¹²¹

At the same time, this lack of debate and knowledge may actually have aided those promoting mainstreaming. Interviewees commented that it made it possible to make suggestions and get on with things without much resistance as others didn't have the knowledge to judge whether it was a good idea or not and were happy to let the 'experts' get on with it:

This was very much a minority interest, now we offered to do something and people said okay go ahead and do it. If they don't have an understanding of it and they don't have objections to it, equality is a good thing, go ahead and do it, and thank you very much and we'll incorporate it because we can't boil it down, so we'll just put it in as an annex. That sounds perhaps more negative than I mean it to, but they were recognising expertise and a contribution, rather than saying let's weigh this up, it was okay, they were content with that.¹²²

The irony of 'bolting on' an annex on mainstreaming when the logic of mainstreaming is to integrate equality into central processes rather than working through 'add-on' policies is hard to miss. The lack of translation and internalisation that this represented deferred rather than resolved potential differences (this issue is discussed further below). It also meant, that mainstreaming existed for many as an empty concept, and therefore would be strongly affected by the extant frames in operation.

Extant Frames

In chapter three, it was argued that, at the UK level, New Labour's focus on social exclusion, preference for win-win strategies, emphasis on individual responsibility, dislike of (open support for) redistributive policies, and the importance attached to consensus and economic policy have created an unfavourable climate for the development of mainstreaming's transformative potential. In Scotland, there are clear constraints on the extent to which Scottish Labour can, or would want to, 'roll out' an unfettered New Labour strategy. These constraints come in the form of the electoral system in Scotland – which has resulted in many more parties being represented in the Parliament, the need for a coalition government between Scottish

¹²¹ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

¹²² Interview 14 (08-12-03)

Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats, and a centre-left opposition party which is committed to Scottish independence — a perceived attachment to the welfare state in Scotland that is comparatively stronger than in England, and the desire for Scottish Labour to mark itself out as a distinctively Scottish party. Brown (2001a, p. 710) argues that McLeish's 'Scottish solutions to Scottish problems' is still the main message of the Scottish Labour Party and while this route runs the 'risk of alienating the leadership in Westminster ... failure to do so would leave them exposed to challenges from the other parties in Scotland, especially the SNP and SSP'.

Analyses of the extent of divergence between Scotland and UK governments in relation to social justice policies tend to stress that it is too early to assert definitively whether a distinctive approach has or has not emerged. The policies of long-term care for the elderly, and tuition fees are most often cited as the notable examples of policy divergence (Keating, 2005), though reference is also made by some (usually feminist authors) to the comparatively high spending on and salience of policies relating to domestic violence in Scotland and increases in provision of childcare (Breitenbach, 2004; Mackay, 2004a).

Analyses of policy divergence in the area of Social Justice have addressed differences in the social inclusion / exclusion agendas of Scotland and the UK (Fawcett, 2003; Mooney and Poole, 2004), considered the extent to which women parliamentarians have 'made a difference' to political culture and policy outcomes (Mackay, 2004a; Mackay et al, 2003a; Mackay, 2005), and made initial comments on the development of mainstreaming strategies (Clavero and Daly, 2004; Mackay et al, 2003b). Writing with respect to the Social Inclusion Network developed in Scotland, Helen Fawcett finds that 'it is clear the social justice strategy for Scotland has been very much driven by Westminster ... Interview evidence suggests that, rather than developing its own policy for Scotland, the Scottish Executive used the Westminster proposals as a template for Scottish policy. In this sense there has been absolutely no difficulty in implementing the 'third way' in Scotland' (2003, pp. 446 – 7). On the other hand, she also points to the difference of language used in the Scottish context – social 'inclusion' rather than 'exclusion', highlighting the ability of the devolved authority to change the emphasis of government policy, and argues that the use of different language 'represented a rejection of many of the ideas associated with social exclusion prior to the 1997 election, most notably the focus on the behavioural causes of poverty' (2003, p. 446). Given the importance argued for language for mainstreaming as a discursive strategy, these seemingly rhetorical differences are arguably highly important. On the other hand, McEwen suggests that significant

institutional barriers to policy divergence 'help to explain why the Scottish Executive's social justice objectives, first set out in 1999, are firmly embedded within and dependent upon social and economic policies pursued at the UK level' (2003, p. 11). She further proposes that 'while social democracy was the prevailing ideology of the home rule movement, it is rather less prominent in the devolution era' (2003, p. 13).

Mooney and Poole challenge the extent to which a distinctively Scottish social welfare policy has emerged post-devolution, arguing that the *New Scotland* is largely mythical and that a focus on differences between Scotland and England may obscure the extent to which such differences exist within the two countries as well (2004, pp. 478 – 9). They argue that while institutions and attitudes do matter, it is not to the extent to which it is sometimes assumed (2004, p. 475) and that despite evidence of forces for both divergence and convergence 'we are arguably not seeing any radical departures' (2004, p. 473). Johnstone et al (2003) find that the 'neo-liberalism of New Labour is just as apparent in Scotland as it is elsewhere in Britain' and that the economic agenda still underpins social policy (2003, p. 12). McEwen quotes the First Minister from a speech made at the launch of the Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice as evidence that '[s]ocial justice is now subordinate to the pursuit of skills development, innovation and support for business' (2003, p. 13). The passage quoted, also references the 'opportunity for all' agenda we saw was prevalent at a UK level (see chapter three).

In contrast, early evaluations of the mainstreaming strategy have found some differences between mainstreaming agendas in Scotland and the UK (Beveridge et al, 2000). Clavero and Daly (2004) report interviewees in Scotland stated a stronger commitment to participation, partnership and social dialogue, and a stronger linking between the incorporation of an equality perspective and the overall quality of policy (with specific improvements in the understanding and awareness of the problematic of equality and inequality, the resources devoted to equality in general, gender-disaggregated statistics, and the participation of women's organisations) than those in England.

Conclusions—papering over conflict

Throughout the campaigns for a gender balance in the new parliament, women have maintained a belief that increasing the numbers of women in the parliament

(symbolic representation) will also lead to differences in the style of politics and in policy outcomes (substantive politics) (Brown, 1996a). As argued throughout this chapter, there has been a dual strategy of 'place' and 'voice': 'the debate started to get broader than that ... the question was asked, 'well what impact would they have', and so it is going beyond just a justice issue to get them there and an equality issue, but what would they do when they were there'.¹²³ Yet, for reasons discussed above, attention to the second strand of this dual strategy, and particularly to issues of how a civil service culture would affect its development, was largely absent.

As we have seen, the decision to create an equality unit and to pursue a mainstreaming strategy was strongly influenced by recommendations of the Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament. The CSG's recommendations were in turn strongly influenced by a group of strategically placed women within the CSG. In turn, this group of women maintained strong contacts with women activists and academics in women's organisations and civic society. The involvement of these key women, who were able to bridge the divide between women's organisations and the civil service and who had knowledge of how the administration works, in the internal decisions of bodies like the CSG was central to the inclusion of many, if not all, of the gender issues in the final recommendations on the new institutions (see Chapter 5).

This sustained activity by these women was vital to keeping gender on the agenda of democratic reform: '[t]he men's agenda was different, and we had to keep raising the issue. Although some men on the Electoral Reform Group were supportive and sympathetic to our demands, we doubt whether they would have pursued the issue. We were the ones who had to argue the case again and again.'¹²⁴ Women involved in constitutional change in Scotland were also active in networks at European and International levels where the concept of gender mainstreaming was being raised as the key approach to addressing gender inequality by governments. This provided a route for the diffusion of mainstreaming into the Scottish context where it was utilised to address the relative lack of supporting mechanisms and practices for parliamentarians championing a vision of difference.

Thus it is argued that mainstreaming, diffused through Beijing and the EU, was picked up by a group of strategically placed women and became the mechanism for

¹²³ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

¹²⁴ Yvonne Strachan, quoted in Brown et al., 2002, p. 441

taking forward the second strand of a strategy of women's representation. The ease with which the policy was adopted was balanced by the absence of significant scrutiny of the difficulties which pursuing it might bring. In particular, the strength of the 'common sense' frame deflected inspection from the implications of a transformative version of mainstreaming:

the radical element of it wasn't appreciated, as I say, it seemed like common sense, 'oh yes, that sounds like quite a good idea', you know, who could disagree at one level. But actually, just like when people agreed to equal numbers of men and women in the labour party, 50/50, it was only when it actually hit ... it was that 'oh boy'. So the it's the theory that sounds fine, but the operating in practice and what the implications mean in terms of resources and priorities and lots of these things didn't really quite hit home.¹²⁵

This quote well illustrates the ambiguity in the early framings of mainstreaming, and the extent to which potential for frame conflict was latent within these ambiguities. The potential of frame conflict is picked up again in chapter six when we look at the day-to-day experience of implementation mainstreaming in the Scottish Executive. Having considered the context into which mainstreaming was adopted in Scotland in the present chapter, the next chapter analyses the framing and reframing of mainstreaming in the *Equality Strategy*.

¹²⁵ Interview 17 (11-12-03)

5

Framing and reframing in the Equality Strategy

In the previous two chapters, we have recounted the rise and adoption of the mainstreaming strategy at UK and Scottish levels, and have considered the possible implications that dominant framings in each environmental context may have for its development. It was suggested that, in contrast to the outlook at the UK level, the Scottish case provides an opportunity for the development of a 'participatory-democratic' approach to mainstreaming.¹²⁶ This opportunity has resulted both from successful frame alignment between the values of gender and democracy in the pre-devolution period and also from the strength and networking of women's organisations and individuals working to secure women's representation as place and voice (see chapter four).

While mainstreaming was adopted within a strongly politicised and normative environment, it was 'bolted on' to existing strategies for representation without itself receiving significant interrogation. The translation and internalisation of the concept occurred in a parallel process, and can be analysed through the medium of key documents. This process culminated in the publication of the Scottish Executive's *Equality Strategy* which set out its definition of approach to mainstreaming. Given the favourable context in which it was adopted, what have been the dominant framings of mainstreaming as officially defined and delineated in Scotland? What kinds of frame processes are discernable? Where has the Scottish strategy drawn from, and what framings has it adopted from the various accounts of, and prescriptions for, mainstreaming developed at both international and

¹²⁶ See chapter one for discussion of difference between 'participatory—democratic' and 'expert—technocratic' approaches to mainstreaming.

national levels? What is the 'gender equality frame' in use? These questions are the subject of the present chapter.

The development of the Scottish Executive's mainstreaming strategy can be analysed as a text-based process. As seen in the previous chapter, the concept's first textual appearance was in a document written in preparation for the *Changing the Face of Scotland's Politics* conference following the general election of 1997; it was endorsed by the CSG in its report on the Scottish Parliament. Once the parliament was established in 1999, the Equality Unit of the Scottish Executive set about developing and consulting on an Equality Strategy for the Executive. Through the consultation document *Towards an Equality Strategy* and the subsequent *Equality Strategy: Working together for equality*, the Executive develops and defines its mainstreaming strategy. The *Equality Strategy* is thus a pivotal document for mainstreaming in the Scottish Executive and it forms the central focus of this chapter.

While the focus of this study is on the development and implementation of mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive, it should be noted that mainstreaming has also been developed in a parallel process within the Parliament. Following the *Equality Statement* to the Parliament by Minister for Communities Wendy Alexander on 1st December 1999, Parliament debated equality for the first time on the 2nd December 1999. Under Parliament's Standing Orders all legislation proposed by the Executive must be accompanied by a statement of its impact on equal opportunities in the policy memorandum accompanying the bill. The Policy Memorandum, published separately from the other accompanying documents for an Executive Bill, sets out the Bill's policy objectives, what alternative approaches were considered, the consultation undertaken and an assessment of the effects of the Bill on equal opportunities, human rights, island communities, local government, sustainable development and other matters considered relevant. An Equal Opportunity Committee has been created as one of eight mandatory committees; it has responsibility for considering and reporting on equal opportunities issues and monitoring equal opportunities in Parliament. To aid MSPs in carrying out mainstreaming, a 'checklist for MSPs' and accompanying guidance notes were prepared by Mackay and Bilton on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality, launched by the First Minister in 2000. In 2001 Equality Guidelines for mainstreaming in the Committees were commissioned by SPICE on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Committee *Mainstreaming Equality in*

the Committees of the Scottish Parliament was published in 2001 (Yeandle, Booth and Bennett in collaboration with Reeves).

As previous chapters have shown, the concept of mainstreaming has been promoted at various levels and by a range of bodies. For many of the actors involved in its implementation, there remains confusion over the meaning of mainstreaming in their particular institutional context. In Scotland, the *Equality Strategy* has the potential to develop a shared meaning within the organisation of the Executive, through the creation of a 'collective memory' (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997) of the development and purpose of mainstreaming. This process involves the use of 'core framing tasks' (Snow and Benford, 1998; Benford and Snow, 2000) which, through the development of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames, identify the problem to be addressed, propose a solution and strategies to arrive at it, and provide a motivation for action. If accepted these frames can aid a process of 'post-rationalisation' wherein mainstreaming is accepted as a planned and home-grown solution to the problems of inequality in Scotland, rather than viewed as an imported and alien strategy. For this to be achieved the *Strategy* must re-employ framings of mainstreaming developed in the other texts on which it draws. As will be discussed, these include both those explicitly referenced, such as the consultation exercise, as well as those implicitly cited but not directly referenced (such as *Learning from Experience*). I first establish the connections between the *Equality Strategy* and these other texts before considering the function and significance of each and embarking on a more in-depth analysis of the *Equality Strategy*.

The *Strategy's* status as a key agent in the discursive construction of mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive was supported in interviews. For those working in the Equality Unit, the *Strategy* was cited as the basis of a shared understanding of what mainstreaming meant. For those who had joined the Unit after the publication of the *Strategy*, this was seen as a far more important influence than international organisations or Europe.

The Equality Strategy and a community of texts¹²⁷

The *Equality Strategy: Working together for equality* was published on the 6th of November 2000. The strategy was explicitly informed by a consultation exercise conducted by the Equality Unit comprising a written consultation, discussion with key equality bodies and meetings with 'grass-roots equality organisations'.¹²⁸ The *Strategy* also built 'on the hard work and commitment of those people who, for many years, have sought to progress equality'.¹²⁹ It was written in the context of the 'strong commitment to putting equality at the heart of policy, practices and procedures throughout the preparations for setting up the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Executive', and with respect to the CSG's recommendations on equal opportunities including the recommendation 'that as a key principle, the Scottish Parliament should recognise the need to promote equal opportunities for all in its operation and its appointments'.¹³⁰ The *Strategy* refers to the Executive's previous commitment, made in *Making it work Together: a Programme for Government* (published in September 1999), 'to promoting equality for all and its determination to place equality at the heart of policymaking'.¹³¹ The *Programme for Government* was the main partnership document of the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition government, and set out the government's goals for different policy areas.

The scope of the *Strategy* was bounded by the statement on equal opportunities contained in Schedule 5 paragraph L2 of the Scotland Act (1998). Under the Act, legislative power on equal opportunities was reserved to Westminster with an exemption for '[t]he encouragement (other than by prohibition or regulation) of equal opportunities, and in particular of the observance of the equal opportunity requirements' (1998, ch46). This exemption imposed duties on:

(a) any office-holder in the Scottish Administration, or any Scottish public authority with mixed functions or no reserved functions, to make arrangements with a view to securing that the functions of the office-holder or authority are

¹²⁷ The idea of a community of texts follows both from connections between the authors of those texts, discussed below, and from the idea of intertextuality which has been discussed in chapter two.

¹²⁸ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 7

¹²⁹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1

¹³⁰ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 4

¹³¹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 5

carried out with due regard to the need to meet the equal opportunity requirements,
or

(b) any cross-border public authority to make arrangements with a view to securing that its Scottish functions are carried out with due regard to the need to meet the equal opportunity requirements.

"Equal opportunities" was defined as 'the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions'.¹³²

The *Equality Strategy* explicitly locates itself in relation to the consultation document *Towards an Equality Strategy*, the *Programme for Government*, and the *Report of the Consultative Steering Group (CSG)*. The Strategy also implicitly draws upon a range of texts relating to the strategy of gender and equality mainstreaming but which it does not actually reference. This leaves the writer with a problem, how to establish the influence of texts which are not formally acknowledged? One route is to establish connections between the authors of the different texts, and to demonstrate that the authors of the *Equality Strategy* were aware of the other documents. Another is to show references made in other government produced documents relating to the *Equality Strategy*, two such are significant here: the Scottish Parliament Information Service's (SPICe) briefings on *Mainstreaming Equality Issues* (5th August 2003) and *Briefing for debate on the Equality Strategy* (7th November 2000). The third route is to ask interviewees which texts they believe have been significant in shaping the Strategy.¹³³

While the explicit references in the Strategy document are largely to Scottish events and contexts (devolution, consultation within Scotland, existing inequalities in Scotland)¹³⁴ the implicit references are to both Scottish and non-Scottish texts. These texts, in turn, have been 'in dialogue' with each other, more or less explicitly. Many

¹³² "'Equal opportunity requirements" means the requirements of the law for the time being relating to equal opportunities. "Scottish functions" means functions which are exercisable in or as regards Scotland and which do not relate to reserved matters' (Scotland Act, 1998, Ch 46).

¹³³ This process is complicated as the Equality Strategy's official author is the Scottish Executive rather than individuals, however the size of the Unit at this point means Unit authorship is still informative

¹³⁴ The Strategy also makes explicit reference to UK, European and International legislative frameworks and obligations.

of the authors of these texts are themselves involved in feminist and academic networks and through these have contacts with each other. As mainstreaming has gained greater salience as an approach to equal opportunities, 'mainstreaming networks' have developed which have strengthened these links.

The key texts identified as influencing the Equality Strategy are:

- the final report of the Council of Europe's *Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices* (Council of Europe, 1998);
- the research report '*Mainstreaming' Equal Opportunities* (Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland, 1998) which was commissioned by the CSG;
- the report of the CSG *Shaping Scotland's Parliament* (CSG, 1998) — in particular 'Annex H' on 'Mainstreaming Equality' and;
- the research report *Learning from experience: lessons in mainstreaming equal opportunities* (Mackay, F. and Bilton, K., 2000). Following its publication, 'Research Findings' from the *Learning from Experience* report were commissioned and published by the Scottish Executive, and the whole report was later published on its website.

In addition to these key mainstreaming texts, analysis also includes attention to the Partnership Agreement between Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democrats *Making it work together: A programme for government* (Scottish Executive, 1999), the Minister for Communities' *Equality Statement to Parliament* (1st December 1999), and the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre's *Briefing for debate on the Equality Strategy* (SPICe, 2000).

In analysing the *Equality Strategy*, I am interested in its relationship to these other texts in a particular sense. The *Equality Strategy* represents a significant 'moment' for mainstreaming in Scotland: it sets out the Executive's definition and approach to mainstreaming, and thus imposes its own framing. Whether recognised or not, this framing exists in relation to others, which it draws upon and reframes. In this sense, I am interested in the concept of 'intertextuality' – the connections and relationships between texts – particularly in the relationships between frames, and in what happens when these are reframed in a Scottish context (with all the specificities we saw in the previous chapter). One of the interesting questions here is what happens

to the framing of mainstreaming in the move from independent to government-produced documents. Interviewees' comments as to which texts had been most influential to the development of the strategy supported the analysis presented here, thus defining a selection of documents to be analysed in this chapter. The following section explores the links between the authors of these texts, and suggests that the resulting network constitutes part of an epistemic community (Haas, 1992) concerned with promoting the mainstreaming strategy.¹³⁵

Authorial connections: an epistemic community¹³⁶

The report of the *Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming* was published in May 1998, the *Equality Strategy* in November 2000. During this period, discussion of mainstreaming in Scotland moved from debates within local government and the sidelines of those on gender representation in a future parliament, to be a central focus of debate and work for a small group of centrally placed actors. The temporal context was extremely significant. Not long after devolution, connections between those who had worked closely to promote mainstreaming as a tool for enhancing democracy in a 'new' Scotland loosened as individuals became involved in different projects and energies diversified. For these two and a half years however (May 1998 – November 2000), efforts and energies were channelled creating close networks. The period also saw conscious and explicit attempts to share lessons and learning between Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the area of equal opportunities. In Northern Ireland, the statutory duty on public bodies to produce and review Equality Schemes, created by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, created a momentum which helped to drive events in the other regions. The Equality Commission in Northern Ireland, charged with overseeing the effectiveness of the duties, sponsored the dissemination of the mainstreaming approach. This interregional lesson sharing occurred in the context of wider mainstreaming networks bringing in the European level, and narrower ones within each region.

¹³⁵ By using the term 'epistemic community' I refer to a network of knowledge—based experts or groups with an authoritative claim to policy—relevant knowledge within the domain of their expertise whose members hold a common set of causal beliefs and share notions of validity based on internally defined criteria for evaluation, common policy projects, and shared normative commitments. Also useful in conceptualising networks such as the one described here, and drawing attention to issues of resource dependency and interdependence, is the work of Rhodes (1988; 1997) and Marsh and Rhodes (1992) on 'policy networks' and Sabatier (1993) on 'advocacy coalitions'.

¹³⁶ I am only referring here to connections that are relevant for establishing this network; obviously there are many other connections that could have been made.

Towards an Equality Strategy and the *Equality Strategy* were both produced by the Equality Unit of the Scottish Executive. As the Unit Head, Yvonne Strachan led a small team of civil servants including Louise Donnelly, a career civil servant, and Esther Breitenbach, on secondment from Edinburgh University.¹³⁷ While Donnelly was a career civil servant, both Strachan and Breitenbach were newcomers to the Executive with strong links to women's and devolution networks and were both 'out' feminists. Strachan had worked previously in the trade union sector where she had been Scottish Women's Officer and Industrial Organiser for the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). She had also been chair of the Scottish Convention of Women, a member of the STUC's women's committee, the Women's Coordination Group, the EOC's Scottish Advisory Group and the Women's Advisory Group (WAG) and had worked with the Scottish Constitutional Convention and Engender.

Breitenbach was seconded to the Equality Unit from the Social Policy department of the University of Edinburgh where her work had included joint projects with Fiona Mackay (main author of the USGS report and co-author of *Learning from Experience*) and Alice Brown (member of the SCC and its commission, and a member of the CSG); she was also a founding member of Engender and has been active in the women's movement in Scotland for many years. Following the 1997 General Election, Breitenbach was employed as the Women's Issues Research Consultant within the Women's Issues Branch (WIB) of the Scottish Office, supported by a Women's Issues Research Advisory Group (WIRAG). The other member of the WIB was Louise Donnelly.

Donnelly's previous post within the Executive had been in planning, and while her first formal contact with the concept of mainstreaming was when she joined the Women's Issues Branch (WIB) early in 1999, she had come into contact with environmental impact assessments, and attempts to integrate standards for making publications accessible across the Executive, while in planning.¹³⁸ On joining the WIB and later the Equality Unit, Donnelly immersed herself in mainstreaming networks in Scotland, attending seminars and holding meetings with key individuals. Donnelly met with Mackay a number of times to discuss the *Lessons* research, and took copies of various research materials. She was very familiar with

¹³⁷ Other members of the Unit at this point were Lynn Henni who worked on organising the Women in Scotland Consultative Forum, and Yvonne's secretary Angela Gibson.

¹³⁸ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

both the USGS report and *Learning from Experience* and saw strong links between the mainstreaming, participation and the Modernising Government agenda.¹³⁹

Through their involvement with women's organisations and campaigns for equal gender representation, Strachan and Breitenbach had close ties to the authors of the other key texts I have identified. Mackay and Brown were also both members of Engender (Brown was a founding member). Together with Strachan, Brown had been a member of the Scottish Women's Coordination Group (founding member), the EOC's Advisory Group and WAG. In her capacity as WIRC, Breitenbach had worked with Brown and Morag Alexander (author of the CSG annex on mainstreaming and Director EOC (Scotland)) who were both members of WIRAG. Breitenbach had also worked with Alexander on an Equal Opportunities legacy report in the run up to local government reorganisation *Quality Through Equality* (1995). Mackay, Brown and Breitenbach were also connected with EOC and local government women's and equal opportunities' officers in Scotland and Wales through the 1996 – 1997 ESRC funded *Gender and Transitions in Local State* project, as part of which various seminars were hosted including one on mainstreaming. This project was followed by the ESRC seminar series 1997 – 1998 connecting Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England, *Gender and the Local State*, which resulted in the publication *The Changing Politics of Gender Equality in Britain* (Breitenbach et al (eds), 2002). Brown had been a member of the CSG and Alexander had worked on its Expert Panel on Procedures and Standing Orders, the CSG had commissioned the USGS report.

The *Gender Audit*, a publication combining research, statistics and expert commentary to provide a picture of the position of women in Scotland and now recognised as a forerunner of mainstreaming was a further point of connection. Breitenbach and Brown were founder editors of the *Gender Audit* (Breitenbach from 1992 to 1996, and Brown from 1992 to 1995) and Mackay was a founder contributor and editor from 1995 to 2000. Bilton (co-author of *Lessons*) had prepared a briefing paper for Breitenbach while on a work placement within the WIB, and later worked within the Equality Unit as an administrative assistant and as a contract researcher analysing responses to the Equality Strategy consultation. In 2000, the *Gender Audit* was co-edited by Mackay and Bilton. As Director of the EOC (Scotland) Alexander had frequent contact with the other authors, and through the EOC provided some

¹³⁹ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

financial support for the *Lessons* research. She had also been involved in EOC research projects on mainstreaming equality at local government level.¹⁴⁰

In August 1999 these women, with the exception of Alexander (the EOC was represented by her colleague Angela O'Hagan) were brought together for an informal meeting or 'brainstorming session' on mainstreaming, organised by the WIB.¹⁴¹ The questions to be addressed at the meeting were:

- What do we understand by 'mainstreaming'?
- What are the different definitions being used?
- What are the tools required to carry out mainstreaming?
- What strategies might be developed for taking mainstreaming forward?
- How can we use existing resources and expertise most effectively?
- Suggestions for priorities and timescales

The briefing paper Bilton had prepared for the meeting and the discussion during it drew upon the report of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists, which, as we saw in Chapter one, had 'aimed to provide recommendations [on mainstreaming] valid for national, regional and local levels as well as for the Council of Europe' and which, the authors suggested, 'should be seen as an attempt at sharing and transmitting knowledge'.¹⁴² The transmission of this knowledge was aided and continued through other written work by Verloo including several published articles on mainstreaming, and an unpublished paper analysing frame processes within the Group of Specialists' report and through developing academic networks on mainstreaming. Verloo was Rapporteur at a CoE conference on mainstreaming in Athens at which Teresa Rees was a key speaker and has spoken at several UK conferences on mainstreaming at which Mackay and Rees have also spoken.¹⁴³ In

¹⁴⁰ EOC (1997) *Mainstreaming Gender in Local Government: A framework and synthesis report*.

¹⁴¹ The meeting was also attended by two representatives from local government with expertise in gender equality and mainstreaming: Sarah Hutchison from Fife Council, and Ellen Kelly from Edinburgh City Council.

¹⁴² CoE, 1998, p. 5

¹⁴³ Rees is an academic based at Cardiff University, Wales who has published on Mainstreaming in Wales and in the European Union. She was also the EOC's Commissioner for Wales (1996 – 2002). Her book *Mainstreaming Equality in the European Union* (Routledge, 1998) categorised approaches to equality as 'tinkering', 'tailoring' and 'transforming' and equated mainstreaming with the last of these. Her publications on mainstreaming have included a chapter in an edited collection by Brown, Mackay and

1997, Verloo, Woodward¹⁴⁴, Mackay, Brown and Breitenbach attended an ECPR workshop on gender mainstreaming and state feminism in Bern and in 1998 Breitenbach, Verloo and Woodward attended a mainstreaming conference in Warwick.

Thus at this early stage, before the formal creation of the Equality Unit, the authors of my 'key texts' were explicitly involved in dialogue about the mainstreaming strategy. As well as the connections between these authors, there were also links to experts on European mainstreaming working at the University of Strathclyde, in particular Dory Reeves and Rona Fitzgerald, which reinforced connections between the European and regional level. The EOC (Scotland) also had close links to Europe – its research on mainstreaming at local government level was funded under an EC Action Programme and involved transnational partners.

The growing number of seminars and conferences held on the subject of mainstreaming in the UK and Europe have created a physical space for the exchange of thinking and research within this network, and have provided links into others. In addition to the 'brainstorming' session discussed above, three are of particular interest to this analysis. The first is a Colloquium held in May 1999 connected to the 'Predicting the Impact of Policy' (PIP) research project, which was coordinated by Fiona Beveridge and Sue Nott of the Feminist Legal Research Unit at the University of Liverpool, and funded by the European Commission Targeted Socio-Economic Research Funds.¹⁴⁵ Mackay, Verloo and Rees were speakers at the Colloquium; also speaking were Fiona Reynolds of the Women's Unit, Anna Havnoer of the European Commission and Christopher McCrudden of Lincoln College, Oxford. Verloo discussed the development of mainstreaming through the Council of Europe and the work of the Group of Specialists, Mackay spoke about the Scottish experience. In her paper, Mackay emphasised that in contrast to its development at a UK level, mainstreaming was being understood as part of gendering the devolution reform process and was therefore framed within the

Webb (Rees, T. (2002) 'The politics of "mainstreaming" gender equality' in E. Breitenbach, A. Brown, F. Mackay and J. Webb (eds.) *The Changing Politics of Gender Equality in Britain* Basingstoke: Palgrave pp. 45 – 69).

¹⁴⁴ Woodward is an academic based at the Free University of Brussels and is co-founder of its Centre for Women's Studies. She has published widely on European gender mainstreaming.

¹⁴⁵ The findings from this project were the basis of the book *Making Women Count: Integrating gender into law and policy—making* edited by Beveridge, Nott and Stephen. The overall aim of the research had been 'to suggest how equality concerns could best be integrated into the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all policies, measures and activities at Community, national, regional and local level' (Beveridge et al, 1999, p. 3).

discourse of democracy and the desire for a new politics.¹⁴⁶ This analysis fed into Beveridge et al.'s (2000) distinction between 'democratic-participatory' and 'expert-technocratic' versions of mainstreaming discussed in chapter four. The Colloquium thus provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas between Verloo and Mackay as well as disseminating these to other actors.

The second key conference was organised by the Governance of Scotland Forum at the University of Edinburgh to launch the report *Learning from Experience* in April 2000. Mackay and Bilton spoke on the main findings of the research to an audience of academics, MSPs, government officials and equality experts. Other speakers at the conference included, Alice Brown and Malcolm Chisholm (MSP) and it was chaired by Alexander.

The final conference to be noted here was held at the University of Strathclyde in November 2000 and organised by Dory Reeves and Rona Fitzgerald (who later became policy director of the EOC (Scotland)). The speakers included Rees, Mackay and Bilton, and Margaret Curran, then Deputy Minister for Social Justice. Those attending the conference included O'Hagan of the EOC, Breitenbach, Kylie Stephen of the Women's Unit and Sonia Mazey, of Hertford college, Oxford who has written about mainstreaming at the EU level.

In addition to the conferences discussed above, there have been two ESRC funded seminar series on mainstreaming within the UK. The first series, hosted by the Centre for Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, comprised six one-day seminars held between March 1999 and September 2000. Verloo gave papers at the first and second of these and Rees at the second. The second series, hosted by Leeds University, comprised four seminars, held between October 2003 and September 2004 which were attended by Verloo, Woodward, Mackay and Bilton. Seminars and conferences on the theme of mainstreaming have also been hosted by the EOC and European Commission (London, 1998), the Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Diversity (CREID) at Edinburgh University (February and June, 2005), the University of Bristol (May 2003), as well as by the Equality Authority, Ireland (February 2003) and EQUAPOL (Dublin, November 2004). The NICVA 'Engendering Democracy Seminar' held at Queens University, Belfast (December 2004) is also of relevance. In the context of intense

¹⁴⁶ Interview 25 (11-05-04)

interest from academics and policy makers the growth of seminar series and conferences on the mainstreaming strategy has been facilitated and supported by funding from both the ESRC in Britain and by EU funding.

The diagram in figure 2 presents the connections between authors, texts and conferences in the period from the report of the *Group of Specialists* to the publication of the *Equality Strategy*. A Scottish Gender Equality Research Network was established in 1997 which also helped to bring together the key players and maintain their contacts with women's organisations in Scotland as did membership of groups such as Engender, involvement in the 50/50 campaign and affiliations with bodies such as the EOC and trades unions. The Scottish conferences also served to disseminate these actors' framings of mainstreaming to politicians and policy makers as the conferences drew academic, practitioner and governmental audiences.

The opportunity for ideas and research to filter from outside organisations through to the Equality Unit in the Scottish Executive was greatly enhanced by the appointments of Strachan and Breitenbach enabled, as we saw in chapter four, by the opportunities for bringing in new expertise brought by devolution.

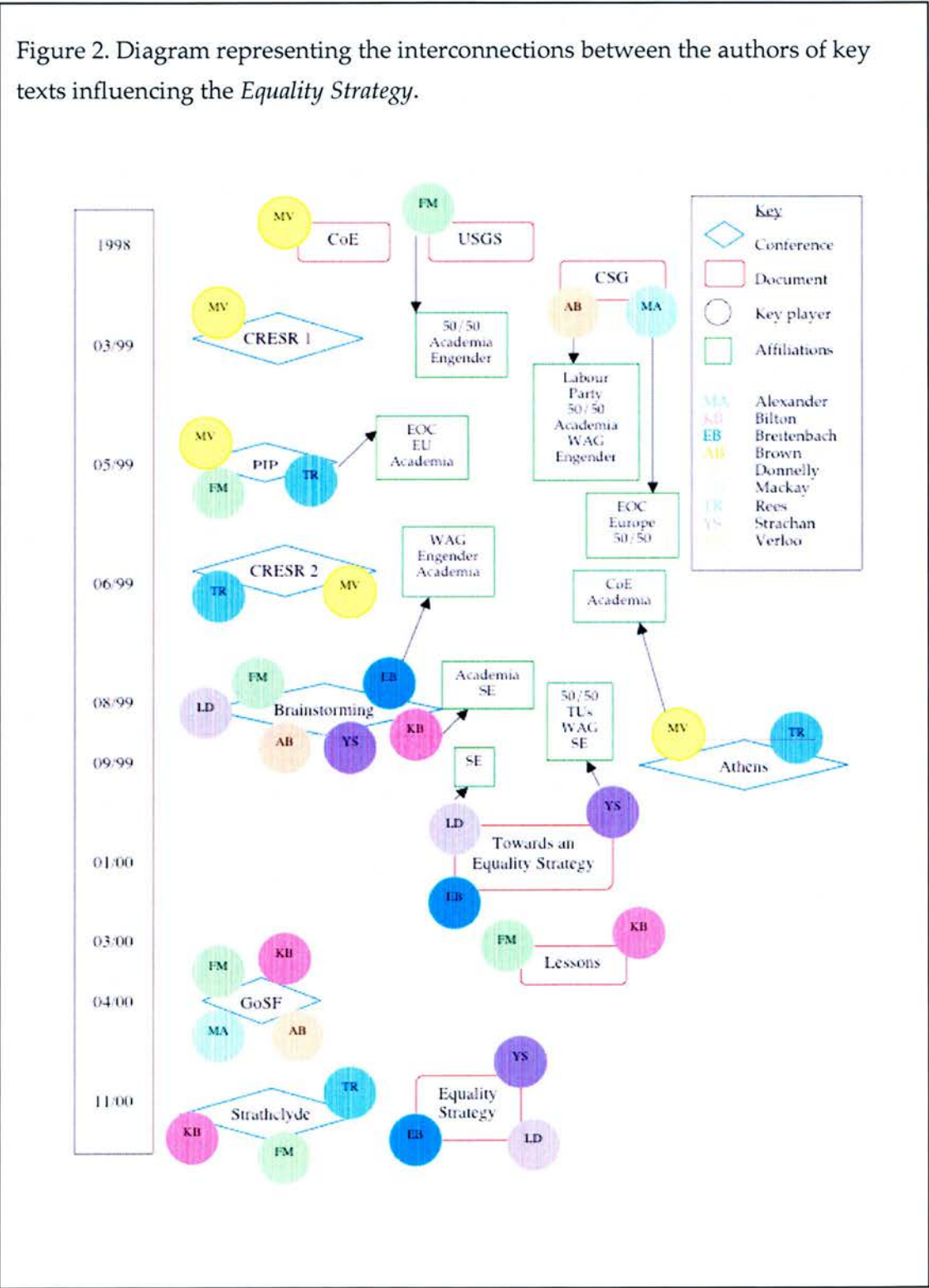
The purpose of this section has been to establish connections between the authors of the reports to which I refer, to suggest that they each were familiar with the work of the others, and to demonstrate the density of the connections between them. To support my contention that these individuals formed an 'epistemic community' for the development of mainstreaming ideas, I need to demonstrate the transfer of ideas between them. In the following sections I shall do this by exploring the transfer of framings of mainstreaming between the key texts, concentrating particularly on the Scottish texts.

Support is given for the influence of the *Learning from Experience* report, and through this the USGS and CoE reports, by the explicit referencing of this report in the two research briefings prepared by the Scottish Parliament Information Service (SPICe). The *Briefing for Debate on the Equality Strategy* 'looks at the main points in the *Equality Strategy* and the concept of mainstreaming. It also considers current developments at a UK and European level'.¹⁴⁷ The research note refers to the main points arising from the consultation on the Equality Strategy, summarises the

¹⁴⁷ SPICe, 2000, p. 1

Strategy and provides a discussion of the Mainstreaming strategy for which it draws upon the Research Findings from the Learning From Experience report. The briefing on *Mainstreaming Equality Issues* published 21 months later cites the main report *Learning from Experience*.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated the many and intertwined links



between the authors of the texts I am concerned with and the many opportunities for the exchange of ideas and opinions on the mainstreaming strategy that existed between them. It has also demonstrated the extent to which these women operated within wider networks including both women's organisations and policy actors at national and transnational levels. Woodward (2004) has described the intertwined networks of feminist academics, activists and policy makers operating at multiple levels of governance as a 'velvet triangle' that is central to mainstreaming and informal governance in social policy making more generally.

Significance and function of the texts: Reiterating the democracy frame

Each of the texts I discuss was designed for a particular purpose and for particular audiences. These are significant in determining the emphasis and framings employed as the authors seek (consciously or not) to achieve frame alignment with their target audiences. Thus, as we saw in chapter one, the Group of specialists report placed mainstreaming within a framework of human rights, while as will be discussed below, the USGS and *Lessons* reports emphasise the context of constitutional change. There are also significant similarities between the documents, not surprising given the connections between the authors and the opportunities for dialogue established above. Whether they recognised it or not, all the authors were engaged in processes of strategic framing balancing the need to ensure acceptance for the strategy with the desire to maintain its potential to deliver change. Achieving this balancing act requires fitting mainstreaming to local contexts at the same time as leaving the concept flexible enough to (appear) to offer something for everyone.

The Report of the Unit for the Study of Government

The report of the Group of Specialists was the major published source for the USGS research project *Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities* which the CSG commissioned to inform its thinking on mainstreaming. The brief for the project was to undertake a desk based project on:

Mechanisms for mainstreaming equal opportunities in the work of Parliaments. For example, is there an Equal Opportunities Committee within the Parliament, or are committees expected to take into account equal opportunities issues.' How is gender balance addressed? In the case of legislative proposals, is there a requirement for a memorandum

explaining how the proposed legislation meets Equal Opportunities criteria?¹⁴⁸

The brief reflects the CSG's concern with parliamentary rather than Executive functions. In this sense, it demonstrates a difference in interpretation of the mainstreaming strategy, which had more commonly been referred to in terms of policies and procedures associated with administrative rather than legislative functions of government. Noting the lack of familiarity with the concept of mainstreaming, the authors extended the brief to place the questions of parliamentary mainstreaming 'within the wider literature, and the concerns and lessons learned so far in equalities work in a variety of institutional settings'.¹⁴⁹ In so doing, the authors also enabled a wider variety of sources to be drawn on than the limited information that existed in relation to specifically parliamentary mainstreaming.

Like the Group of Specialists' report for the Council of Europe (see chapter one), *Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities* also held a significant position with regards to the framing of mainstreaming in relation to its commissioning body; in turn it was also strongly influenced by the principles and ethos that body espoused. The work of the CSG had been an attempt to formalise in the workings of the Parliament the principles and values of the devolution movement. The establishment of a Scottish Parliament was seen to offer 'the opportunity to put in place a new sort of democracy in Scotland, closer to the Scottish people and more in tune with Scottish needs'.¹⁵⁰ The Group's aim was 'to try to capture, in the nuts and bolts of Parliamentary procedure, some of the high aspirations for a better, more responsive and truly democratic system of government that have informed the movement for constitutional change in Scotland'.¹⁵¹ To aid them in this task, the Group adopted four 'key principles' to guide its work; 'sharing the power', 'accountability', 'access and participation' and 'equal opportunities'. By choosing these principles, and recommending their adoption by the Parliament, the CSG placed them centre stage in the ethos underpinning the new institutions. The CSG report conveyed the consensus of its members on the shape the Parliament should take and the cultures it should promote, and through its composition reflected a wider consensus across

¹⁴⁸ USGS, 1998, p. 9

¹⁴⁹ USGS, 1998, p. 9

¹⁵⁰ CSG, 1998, p. v

¹⁵¹ CSG, 1998, p. 2

civil society which conferred authority on its recommendations. As seen in chapter four, ensuring that equality remained a central aspect of this consensus required constant work by certain members of the Group; once established in print in this document, it became harder to dislodge. By the same process, the text also secured the position of mainstreaming as the strategy to take forward the process of engendering the work of government, and set the interpretation of the strategy firmly within a democratic and participatory context, making explicit links between mainstreaming, democratic renewal and gender balance in participation:

Mainstreaming also requires the close involvement of ordinary women and men, and communities of interest in the policy making process. Both gender balance and increased citizen participation are seen to bring benefits to government and to counter the democratic deficit.¹⁵²

Much of the work of the USGS report lay in translating the findings of the report of the Group of Specialists to a Scottish audience. In so doing, the authors strengthened the connection between mainstreaming and democracy, a key aim of their target audience. As we saw in chapter one, enhancing democracy had been a clear underlying theme for the CoE Group, expressed in arguments such as that the achievement of gender equality targets 'is also a way to a deeper understanding and implementation of democracy as such': further the 'development and improvement of representative democracy' was itself listed as one of the targets for gender equality.¹⁵³ At other places in the report though, enhancing democracy became a secondary concern, as for example in the section on why 'gender mainstreaming [is] so important' where enhancing democracy appears as a possible additional outcome of the involvement of both men and women in the policy process - mainstreaming 'involves both women and men and makes full use of human resources, and may help to reduce democratic deficit'.¹⁵⁴ In contrast, within the USGS report, mainstreaming directly 'helps to tackle the democratic deficit'¹⁵⁵ and as a principle 'forms an important theme in the widespread preoccupation in Western European and other liberal or welfare state democracies with improving the quality of government and with deepening democracy by increasing civic participation'.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² USGS, 1998, p. 16

¹⁵³ CoE, 1998, p. 10

¹⁵⁴ CoE, 1998, p. 20

¹⁵⁵ USGS, 1998, p. 5

¹⁵⁶ USGS, 1998, p. 11

The USGS report also firmly links mainstreaming to the CSG's key principles.¹⁵⁷ The report builds on the CoE rationale for mainstreaming, and argues again that it involves the rethinking of mainstream provision, change of organisation cultures and structures, acknowledgement of the shared responsibility of women and men for removing imbalances, and gender balance in decision making. The argument that mainstreaming would 'involve many more people, both women and men' from the CoE report is re-phrased as 'the close involvement of ordinary women and men.' The concept of 'ordinary' women and men resonates with arguments for 'going beyond the "usual suspects"' and involving those with direct experience of discrimination and inequality, which are discussed later. Unlike the CoE report, the USGS report does not make use of the 'win-win' argument and makes less explicit effort to reassure men as a group, though it does reiterate the benefits of mainstreaming for government and policy generally. Neither does the USGS report discuss explicitly power relationships or male domination.

The report of the Consultative Steering Group and the Annex on Mainstreaming

Despite having commissioned the USGS report, and recommending that 'Equal Opportunities should be mainstreamed into the work of the Parliament and through the demands of and scrutiny by the Parliament, into the work of the Executive',¹⁵⁸ the CSG does not provide any substantial discussion of the mainstreaming strategy in the main body of its report. The Group cited the EOC's definition of mainstreaming as 'the integration of equal opportunities into all policy development, legislation, implementation, evaluation and review practices'.¹⁵⁹ While Equal Opportunities is a central theme and key principle of the report, mainstreaming is 'added in' through the reproduction of a submission by the EOC as an annex to the main report.¹⁶⁰ The annex recommends the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Committee and an Equality Unit and that responsibility for 'ensuring the promotion of equal opportunities and elimination of discrimination

¹⁵⁷ USGS, 1998, p. 11

¹⁵⁸ CSG, 1998, p. 12

¹⁵⁹ CSG, 1998, p. 12

¹⁶⁰ Authorship of the annex is not actually stated as EOC but it is clear from statements such 'the EOC wishes to see' or 'in the next sections the EOC outlines'.

through the Parliament's activities should lie with the Scottish Executive'.¹⁶¹ It concludes that '[t]he promotion of inclusiveness and equality of opportunity for all requires that equality must be integral to the infrastructure, procedures and policies of the Parliament'.¹⁶²

In contrast to the other texts, the CSG annex emphasises the potential for mainstreaming to ensure legal compliance above other reasons for mainstreaming, arguing that '[t]he advantage of this approach is that it will enable the Scottish Parliament to avoid discriminatory practices, to keep within the law and to ensure that policy and legislation promote equality generally and result in fairer legislation and quality service'.¹⁶³ Mainstreaming is seen as a means of tackling indirect or unintentional discrimination. In comparison with the other Scottish texts, the annex appears to be geared much more towards a governmental rather than societal audience. The annex emphasises the significance of the opportunity afforded by the creation of new institutions to embed issues of equality of opportunity. Its function is not only to define mainstreaming, but also to outline 'a set of proposals to the Consultative Steering Group which will enable the Scottish Parliament to ensure that it promotes equal opportunities in the conduct of its business'. It links the goals of equality and inclusiveness and suggests that mainstreaming is required to achieve these, the 'promotion of inclusiveness and equality of opportunity for all requires that equality must be integral to the infrastructure, procedures and policies of the Parliament',¹⁶⁴ and argues that consultation and partnership working, as well as an open style in the conduct of business, are required to achieve these goals. It recommends the development of an Equal Opportunities Action Programme and methods for monitoring and reporting on progress.

Despite the lack of integration of its findings into the CSG report, the USGS report had a standing on its own, which continued to influence developments both through particular members of the CSG and later as a resource for those developing the Equality Strategy (table 2).¹⁶⁵ Mackay gave a presentation on the report to the members of the CSG, again emphasising the links between democracy, equality and

¹⁶¹ CSG, 1998, p. 148

¹⁶² CSG, 1998, p. 153

¹⁶³ CSG, 1998, p. 146

¹⁶⁴ CSG, 1998, p. 153

¹⁶⁵ Interview 5 (05-02-02) and Interview 11 (21-11-03).

better government, which was well received.¹⁶⁶ Mackay suspects that the EOC's annex and the USGS report, while significantly different in content and emphasis, may have become conflated in people's minds with the effect that the Annex became shorthand for all the work done on mainstreaming to this point.¹⁶⁷ While the tenor of the EOC annex was predominantly technocratic and legalistic, the approach which came through to *Towards an Equality Strategy* and the *Equality Strategy* is clearly informed by the participatory and democratic framings of mainstreaming in the CoE report and developed in the USGS report and its successor *Learning from Experience*.

Table 2 provides a summary of the rationale given in each of the key texts for the mainstreaming strategy. These statements are indicators both of the goals of the authors, and the anticipated goals of their audiences. They form a significant aspect of the framing of mainstreaming as it is in these statements that transformatory (for example, changing existing structures to achieve equality) or technocratic (for example, ensuring compliance with legal requirements) aims are emphasised.

¹⁶⁶ Interview 17 (11-12-03), Interview 25 (11-05-04) – feedback from member of the Constitution Unit

¹⁶⁷ Interview 25 (11-05-04)

Table 2: Frame transfer

WHY MAINSTREAM?	CoE ¹⁶⁸	USGS	CSG	LFE	TES	ES
Puts people at the heart of policy-making	X	X		X	X	X
Leads to better government	X	X		X	X	X
Involves both women and men and makes full use of human resources (and may help to reduce democratic deficit)	X	X				
Makes gender equality issues visible in the mainstream of society	X	X		X		
Takes into account the diversity among women and men	X	X		X		
Primary tool for the delivery of public policy objectives on the promotion of equality and the effective distribution and delivery of public services		X				
Helps to tackle democratic deficit by encouraging wider participation in the policy process through effective consultation methods	(X)	X		X	X	X
Tackles the structures in society which contribute to, or sustain, gender segregation and discrimination	X	X		X	X	X
Complements lawful positive action designed to address the historic and current impact of discrimination structures and practices	X	X			X	X
Avoid the adoption of policies and programmes which replicate discrimination and exacerbate existing inequalities		X	X	X	X	X
Challenges institutional discrimination				X		

From table 2, it is immediately apparent that the CSG annex on mainstreaming represented a diversion from the political, participatory and democratic framings of mainstreaming in earlier documents. This more technocratic and legalistic emphasis has been something of an anomaly, and the subsequent documents return to previous framings. Putting the EOC's position to the Equal Opportunities

¹⁶⁸ The Council of Europe report is included in this table for comparison, though it the document is discussed separately and at greater length in chapter one.

Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the 16th November 1999, ten days after the publication of the Equality Strategy Alexander also uses the democratic frame:

We think that the most effective way to achieve our aims is through mainstreaming equality of opportunity ... a long-term strategy to frame policies in terms of the real ways in which men's and women's daily lives operate and to change organisation cultures and structures accordingly. In essence, the process puts people and their diverse needs and experiences at the heart of policy making. One can see why a process that helps to achieve that can lead to better government through better-informed policy making and greater transparency and openness in the policy process.

Learning From Experience

The participatory and democratic framings were again reiterated in *Learning from Experience* which updated the USGS report of 1998, linking these to the government's agenda in the form of better government and policy making and suggesting that both the government's modernisation agenda and constitutional change created enabling contexts for the development of equalities work. With mainstreaming formally adopted by both the new Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive, the report continued the work of translating and interpreting examples of mainstreaming from other countries and regions to provide useful lessons for the Scottish institutions. While previous research had done much to internalise the idea of a mainstreaming approach, and to set this within the values that had underpinned demands for constitutional change, there was still little understanding of what such an approach would entail in practice. The report was published at a time when possibilities for informing the development of strategy were high; the Executive had identified a need for research and both it and the Parliament were at this stage explicitly seeking to learn lessons from elsewhere. The authors, aware of the possible 'dangers' of a mainstreaming approach, also saw this as an opportunity to reiterate again the participatory, transformatory and political nature of a 'strong' version of mainstreaming. The framing of mainstreaming within *Lessons* is very close to that of the USGS report, the key additions being that mainstreaming is contextualised within a wider approach to social justice 'it is a social justice-led approach to policy making'¹⁶⁹ and that specific attention is paid to the issue of a generic approach. Due to the favourable political context discussed above, the report worked to disseminate these framings to a wider audience.

¹⁶⁹ Mackay and Bilton, 2000, p. 109.

Learning from Experience aimed both to develop and clarify understandings of mainstreaming and to provide concrete case studies of mainstreaming in practice which would provide examples for the Scottish Parliament and Executive. The final report was much larger than the researchers anticipated and involved substantial amounts of work both in gathering data and also in translating that data into a form understandable in a Scottish context. Since 1998, the volume of initiatives being labelled as mainstreaming had grown in response to its promotion by the EU, CoE and UN. The authors became aware that much of this work involved the 'retrofitting' of existing initiatives under the mainstreaming banner, and in some cases, especially where there was very little history of work on gender or other equality issues within government, the claim to mainstreaming did not relate to substantial work. Part of the report's function then, was to identify and differentiate between different initiatives. In doing so, the authors had to translate the language of mainstreaming, often strongly influenced by a European discourse and style, to try and identify what was really going on. One way in which the authors attempted to clarify and differentiate between initiatives was to argue for a distinction between mainstreaming principles, systems, tools and techniques, and to suggest that the application of some mainstreaming tools or techniques should not be confused with the successful implementation of a full mainstreaming approach. Specifically the authors argued that the existence of 'framework and discrete tools' was often mistakenly portrayed as evidence of a mainstreaming system.¹⁷⁰ In addition, the report discussed the political context of the UK and Scotland, and the issues related to developing a 'generic' approach to mainstreaming as was being proposed in Scotland.

The report has been widely used, and Research Findings were commissioned by the Scottish Executive to aid the wider dissemination of the report's key points. In particular the summary of the 'needs' of mainstreaming has been used to argue for and develop resources in Scotland. The main conclusions of the research were that mainstreaming is being increasingly adopted, but remains poorly understood and developed as a concept, that it brings both promises of progress and dangers of regress in equality if not properly understood and implemented, and that more work needs to be done to theorise the relationship between gender and other areas of inequality if a generic approach to mainstreaming is to be successfully and meaningfully developed. Despite gathering a wide range of examples of activities

¹⁷⁰ Mackay and Bilton, 2000, p. 25

being undertaken under the mainstreaming banner, the authors concluded that as mainstreaming was nowhere fully established and implemented, examples of mainstreaming were difficult to find – and are likely to remain so until specific mainstreaming initiatives are monitored in such a way as to provide them.

The Equality Strategy Consultation

In January 2000 the Scottish Executive Equality Unit launched its consultation paper on the development of an equality strategy *Towards an Equality Strategy*. The strategy was envisaged as a means of turning the Executive's commitment to 'putting equality of opportunity at the heart of all policy making as well as service design and implementation' into a reality. In her foreword to the document, Jackie Baillie (MSP) Minister for Communities stated that '[f]or the strategy to be effective it must reflect the needs of all parts of Scottish society and those most affected must shape it.'¹⁷¹ The paper outlined the Scottish Executive's commitment to equality and equal opportunities, the main principles and commitments which would underpin the Executive's work in this area, and the proposed main strands of the work programme required to develop and implement an equality strategy. Consultees were invited to provide comment in relation to a series of questions — some very specific, some more general in nature — as well as on any issue of concern to them with regard to the development of the strategy. Consultees were asked to comment on three broad areas — the approach to developing the equality strategy, the main components of the strategy, and mechanisms for promoting equality in Scotland.

In addition to this written consultation, the Equality Unit consulted with a number of organisations which it had identified as important partners in taking forward the equality strategy. These included the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), Disability Forum, Equality Network, trade unions and the voluntary sector. 'Grassroots' consultations were also held with minority ethnic people, women, and disabled people in August 2000, following the publication of a report on the responses to the written consultation. The purpose of the 'grassroots' consultations was 'to discuss the issues in more detail, face to face, with people with direct experience and expertise of discrimination and exclusion' and to 'learn more

¹⁷¹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1

about improving participation'.¹⁷² The events 'were aimed at increasing the range and number of people in contact with the Executive, giving more people a chance to be involved in how policy is made and put into practice'.¹⁷³ Roundtable sessions were also held to bring together individuals with particular expertise in mainstreaming and equality areas, and Mackay attended one of these and prepared a submission based on *Learning from Experience*.

The consultation document reframes mainstreaming as a means of achieving its aim for Scotland, stating that '[p]romoting greater equality of opportunity for all is fundamental to the Scottish Executive's commitment to building a just and inclusive Scotland' and that the authors' aim is to 'make an enduring and secure link between concern for equality and the delivery of quality policy and programmes for the new Scotland'.¹⁷⁴ In taking this work forward, dialogue and consultation are considered vital. The document concludes with an excerpt on 'what is mainstreaming' from 'Questions of mainstreaming: examining policy and legislative proposals within an equalities framework' prepared by the EOC, CRE in partnership with the Governance of Scotland Forum which reiterates the frames developed in *Learning from Experience* and 'Mainstreaming' Equal Opportunities.¹⁷⁵

In June 2000 an analysis of the responses to the consultation paper was published to demonstrate the Executive's commitment to ongoing dialogue and to enable respondents to see how their views had been taken up.¹⁷⁶ The report provided an analysis of responses received and built upon information provided in an interim report on the responses produced in April 2000. A total of 185 written responses were received, all of which were included in the analysis presented. The responses received came from a variety of organisations and individuals, and were themselves very varied in nature, ranging from short responses relating to one or more of the specific questions posed to lengthy responses covering in some depth a broad range of more general issues relevant to the development of the strategy. The report provided a broad overview of the responses received. All the responses received were held as a resource to the Equality Unit and other Departments within the

¹⁷² Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 1

¹⁷³ Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 1

¹⁷⁴ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 3

¹⁷⁵ Written by Mackay and Bilton.

¹⁷⁶ A Report on responses to the consultation paper: Towards an Equality Strategy (I was one of two analysts for this)

Scottish Executive in developing and implementing the Equality strategy and more generally in their work. Responses were also made available for consultation by external organisations. Reports were also written up from the meetings with 'grassroots organisations', concentrating on the issues of participation and communication.

In both the written consultation, and the grassroots events, effort was made to make the consultation accessible and to reach a wide audience. The document was printed in large font and copies in large print and alternative language formats were made available. At the 'grassroots' meetings, steps to make the events inclusive included support for travel, childcare and personal support costs, access audits for all venues and provision of Plain English Crystal Mark documents and alternative formats and communication support. Despite initial criticism that the 'grassroots' events would not turn up anything new, these have since been recognised as important both in engaging the Minister for Communities, then Jackie Baillie MSP, with the issues and communities concerned, and in involving a larger range of people in the process.¹⁷⁷

The *Equality Strategy* – balancing bureaucratic and feminist frames

The *Equality Strategy* marks the end of a consultative process (though not the end of dialogue) and the beginning of a project of implementation for the Executive's mainstreaming programme. It was drafted by members of the Equality Unit, with the Head of the Unit closely involved and editorial assistance provided by the Women's Issues Research Consultant.¹⁷⁸ The report spoke both to the Executive itself, and to the external policy community (including activists, academics, local government, equality bodies). In relation to the Executive the *Strategy* provides the organisation with a means of communicating with itself. As mainstreaming is a strategy that is to be overseen by one unit but implemented in all, communicating the strategy to other departments in a persuasive manner is extremely important, thus the document is also concerned with establishing the authority of the *Strategy*. To convey Ministerial authority for such documents through the use of a Foreword,

¹⁷⁷ The will to hold grassroots meetings came from Jackie Baillie in the first place.

¹⁷⁸ Personal communication from Breitenbach. There is no evidence that there was a drafting strategy for this process. Although a request was made to see any previous drafts of the *Strategy*, interviewees were not able to produce such documents.

as is done in the *Equality Strategy*, is usual practice. However, in addition to establishing Ministerial authority, the *Strategy* is also concerned with establishing a broader, deeper and more lasting authority – one that is popular, parliamentary and ‘devolutionary’ i.e. specifically Scottish. As mainstreaming performs as a meta-policy, in other words, is a policy about policy-making, the document can be understood in this context as aiming to have a Constitutional function. This second level of authority is primarily established through frequent reference to responses to the Executive’s consultation exercise, to the central place of equality within the devolution agenda and the key principles of the Scottish Parliament (recommended by the CSG), and through the use of data on the consequences of inequality. As will be seen below, the importance of promoting equality to achieving the Executive’s vision for Scotland provides a further motivational aspect.

As it speaks to the external policy community, the *Strategy* has three main purposes. Firstly, it is an explanatory public information document; it sets out what the Executive intends to do in relation to its work on equality and how mainstreaming is to be implemented across the Executive. Secondly, it is an accountability document; it provides details of actions and timetables against which the Executive can be judged. Lastly, it is a promotional document; it provides justification for why the Executive has chosen this approach and outlines the perceived benefits.

The *Strategy* needs to gain the support of both the internal and external audience. As we see below, it employs framing processes to do this.

The physical document

The *Strategy* is a forty-page document, with a foreword by the then Minister for Social Justice, Jackie Baillie followed by six ‘sections’, two appendices and a glossary. These are summarised in box 1.

Box 1: Summary of Equality Strategy

Ministers Foreword: sets out Executive's vision, what Strategy does, and desired results.

Vision: 'a just and inclusive Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential'. **Problem:** prejudice, discrimination, poverty, alienation, and exclusion.
Results: 'real, long-term change within the Executive and change in the public sector and beyond'.

Section 1: Setting the scene: how equal opportunities became a key principle of the Scottish Parliament and a priority of the Scottish Executive. Includes:

division of powers (UK/Scotland), Scotland Act definition of equal opportunities, key events: take up of powers by new institutions; acceptance of CSG recommendations; setting up Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee; publication of Executive's *Programme for Government*; first Equality Statement to Parliament and first Parliamentary debate on equality, initiatives taken to date by Executive, summary of consultation exercise and the key themes arising therein.

Section 2: Underpinning the strategy: facts on the persistence of inequality in the UK, common features of discrimination and inequality, Executive's task in relation to inequality.

legislative framework on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination including role of the EU, European and International law.

Approaches to equality, key concepts of discrimination and their respective remedies.

Meanings of Equal Opportunities, what different interpretations require, links between Social Justice and Equality and difference/ diversity.

Executive's rationale for Strategy's focus on policy and practice.

Section 3: Linking principles and practice: mainstreaming equality: mainstreaming as a means of achieving the Executive's goals.

Definition, key points and requirements.

how work will be undertaken in partnership with other bodies and individuals and what will inform approaches to consultation and communication.

specific areas of focus for mainstreaming within the Executive - schools and education, and housing.

Section 4: Executive strategy and action: how Executive's aim for Strategy will be achieved.

3 strategic objectives: 'making better policy and providing better services', 'promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination', 'being a good employer' - each subdivided into different elements.

Tables set out actions, completion dates and outcomes for each subdivision.

Section 5: Delivery arrangements: tasks and responsibilities of different parts of Executive.

3 temporal phases- 2000-2001, 2002-2003, 2004-2007.

Actions to produce key elements of accountability, consultation, monitoring and evaluation, and equality indicators.

Section 6: Conclusion: summarises what document has said and done, outlines mandate for way ahead.

Appendix 1: Legislative framework:

explains the relevant parts of the Scotland Act (1998), details UK legislation with relevance to equal opportunities, discusses the European Convention on Human Rights and details relevant EU law and other International obligations.

Appendix 2: Statutory equality bodies: addresses and contact details.

Glossary: defines key terms in the document.

Frame alignment

In telling its story the *Equality Strategy* achieves three 'core framing tasks' (Snow and Benford, 1998; 2000).¹⁷⁹ Firstly, the diagnostic framing *identifies a problem* — the lack of a just and inclusive Scotland — and *attributes blame and responsibility* for this — the continuing existence of prejudice, discrimination, poverty, alienation and exclusion, the limitations of relying on legislative procedures alone to address this, and the responsibility for Scottish government to work, in partnership, to address inequality. Secondly, the prognostic framing *articulates a proposed solution* — to integrate an equality perspective into policy and practice (mainstreaming) working in partnership with experts in the field and involving those with direct experience of inequality — and identifies *strategies for carrying it out* — pp. 17 – 25 of the document detail specific actions. Lastly, the motivational framing provides a *rationale for engagement* – the opportunity for everyone to fulfil their potential, the creation of better policy and services, and an end to the effects of inequality and discrimination.

Within each of these framing tasks, the *Strategy* appeals to different sections of its target audiences. Throughout, the text is at pains to recognise the work, achievements and expertise of others in the area of progressing equality, and 'extending ownership' of the strategy to other organisations and individuals is seen as a central component of achieving its vision.¹⁸⁰ In an analysis of the Group of Specialists' report Verloo (1998) demonstrates how the authors used processes of frame alignment (Snow et al, 1986) to gain acceptance of the mainstreaming strategy among the various 'target audiences' of the report. A similar analysis can be made of the *Equality Strategy*.¹⁸¹

Four key (and overlapping) target audiences for the *Equality Strategy* can be identified:

- '[P]eople and organisations concerned with promoting equality',¹⁸² and in particular those who campaigned on these issues in the pre-devolutionary

¹⁷⁹ Drawing on Verloo (1998) paper in which she uses the Council of Europe (1999) report on gender mainstreaming report as the basis for an analysis of frame alignment strategies.

¹⁸⁰ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 16

¹⁸¹ Though without the benefit that Verloo had of reflection on the process as an insider (she chaired the Group of Specialists)

¹⁸² Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 4

period.¹⁸³ ¹⁸⁴ This would therefore include those individuals and organisations discussed in the previous chapter.

- Those individuals and organisations that responded to the Executive's consultation on developing the *Equality Strategy*, and who attended its 'grassroots' meetings — from the report of responses we know that 185 written responses were received from a variety of organisations and individuals 'including the EOC and CRE, voluntary organisations, local authorities, trade unions, government and other public sector bodies' and that '[g]roups with a clear link to equality issues were all represented amongst the respondents'.¹⁸⁵
- The envisaged partners: Parliament, public sector bodies and agencies, local authorities, statutory equality bodies, communities, educational institutions, voluntary sector, private sector, established forums and networks, academics and trade unions¹⁸⁶
- Members of the Scottish Executive

For the Executive, the background of historical relations between equality activists and government in Scotland, and the subsequent debate about the benefits and dangers of working through the state, and about the related benefits and dangers of the mainstreaming approach, complicate the process of gaining the support of its target audiences. The Executive must both demonstrate its commitment to and responsibility for addressing the issues, and recognise that much work to this point has been undertaken outwith government and, therefore, that much expertise also lies there. As one respondent to *Towards an Equality Strategy* commented 'the Scottish Executive needs to accept that there are others who have more in-depth knowledge than the Scottish Executive has on particular subject and interest areas'.¹⁸⁷ In contrast to the early negotiations between the Scottish Office and women's organisations, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, were characterised by the meeting of two 'different worlds', the 'new' Executive is

¹⁸³ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 4

¹⁸⁴ The Strategy notes that it is through the efforts of such people and organisations that equal opportunities became a key principle of the Scottish parliament and a priority for the Scottish Executive (Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 4).

¹⁸⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 98

¹⁸⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 15

¹⁸⁷ Lothian Council of Disabled People, quoted in *A report on responses to the consultation paper: Towards an Equality Strategy* The Scottish Executive Equality Unit, June 2000b, p. 50

attempting to present a picture of one unified world with common goals and values. In both the Minister's Foreword and the first section of the *Strategy* the Executive immediately follows a statement of its commitment to addressing inequality with recognition of the work of other bodies and individuals. Using the concept of 'partnership', the *Strategy* suggests that the values and objectives of the two are the same, and moreover are best achieved through common endeavour:

We have consulted with many groups and individuals across Scotland, and our strategy draws on what we have learned from them. It builds on the hard work and commitment of those people who, for many years, have sought to progress equality. We will now deliver it in partnership ... This is modern government in practice. Modern government – working together for equality – improving the lives of the people of Scotland.¹⁸⁸

The concept of partnership has developed in the Executive's vocabulary as a core value of the 'new politics' in Scotland. The title of the equality strategy, *Equality Strategy: Working together for Equality*, echoes that of *Making it work together: A programme for government* and the previous *Partnership for Scotland* — the policy agreement between Scottish Labour and Scottish Liberal Democrats. In his 'pledge to the people of Scotland' Dewar promises 'we will work together, not just as political parties, but as a partnership with the people and communities of Scotland' (Scottish Executive, 1999, p. 2). The commitment to partnership working built on the values of broad-based consensus and involvement that had underpinned the approach of those working for constitutional change. 'Social Partnerships' constitute one of the six recommendations made in Annex G (mechanisms for encouraging participation: general) of the CSG report;¹⁸⁹ in Annex H, the EOC recommends that a programme approach to work on equal opportunities would encourage 'private/public partnerships [and] voluntary and statutory sector partnerships'.¹⁹⁰ The USGS report recommends 'a partnership approach drawing upon the considerable expertise of local government and statutory equalities agencies'¹⁹¹ and suggests that 'the knowledge base, expertise, structures and practice in equalities work, integrated and specific, is far more developed and advanced at local authority level than at either national British or national Scottish level. This implies the need for parliament to draw upon the existing and developing expertise at local

¹⁸⁸ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1, see also pp., 15, 18, 21 – 22, 29

¹⁸⁹ CSG, 1998, p. 144

¹⁹⁰ CSG, 1998, p. 150

¹⁹¹ USGS, 1998, p. 8

government level and to work in partnership with local government organisations such as CoSLA as well as with individual local authorities'.¹⁹² These themes are picked up in Wendy Alexander's *Equality Statement to Parliament* (1 December 1999) '[w]e believe that developing a partnership approach is fundamental to the development and implementation of an equality strategy' and partnership forms the context for the Executives approach in *Towards an Equality Strategy*.¹⁹³

Within the *Equality Strategy*¹⁹⁴ partnership is a way of engaging 'communities and people with direct experience of inequality and discrimination'¹⁹⁵ and working 'collaboratively with those with specific knowledge, expertise and interest in equality issues'.¹⁹⁶ In this interpretation of partnership, the *Strategy* is drawing on comments made in response to its consultation, and whether knowingly or not, to those made in response to the CSG consultation, that communication needed to go beyond the "usual suspects".¹⁹⁷ The report on the responses to the consultation on the *Equality Strategy* allocates a whole chapter to the discussion of 'partnership and roles'; the report finds that 'the commitment to partnership working, as set out in the consultation paper, was widely endorsed by respondents'.¹⁹⁸ The report also notes that 'a number [of respondents] stressed the need to look beyond what several referred to as "the usual suspects", reaching out to less obvious communities and groups, and in particular ensuring the possibility of individual involvement'.¹⁹⁹ Several respondents also 'stressed the need to involve those most affected by inequalities'.²⁰⁰ The *Strategy* explicitly references the influence of these responses stating that '[w]e have consulted with many groups and individuals across Scotland, and our strategy draws on what we have learned from them',²⁰¹ and uses their existence to give support and legitimacy to the strategy; '[t]he consultation process provided a clear mandate for much of the way ahead'.²⁰² As seen earlier, 'the need for ordinary voices' has also been a key component of mainstreaming as

¹⁹² USGS, 1998, p. 64

¹⁹³ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 9

¹⁹⁴ Scottish Executive, 2000a, pp. 1, 15, 18, 21 – 22, 29

¹⁹⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 29

¹⁹⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 30

¹⁹⁷ CSG, 1998, p. 97

¹⁹⁸ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 44

¹⁹⁹ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 47

²⁰⁰ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 48

²⁰¹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1

²⁰² Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 29

defined in the USGS report - “mainstreaming’ is not a technocratic strategy and is underpinned by a recognition that ordinary people are ‘qualified’ to participate in policy making’²⁰³ — and in *Lessons* mainstreaming entails the ‘need for ordinary voices to be heard’.²⁰⁴ The Group of Specialists finds that ‘Gender mainstreaming involves a greater number of people, including external actors ... [it] also leaves room for involving people who will be affected by policies’.²⁰⁵

By using the concept of partnership the Executive is attempting to create a frame bridging — the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem (Benford and Snow, 2000) — between the goals of the government in Scotland and external actors working to promote equality and to demonstrate its commitment to ‘open’ government. At the same time, the concept is also used to create a bridge between the Executive’s aims to promote equality and the wider UK governmental aim of pursuing a ‘modern’ approach to government, making a link not only between external activists and the Scottish Executive but between these groups and individuals and the UK government philosophy more widely: ‘[t]his is modern government in practice. Modern government – working together for equality – improving the lives of the people of Scotland’.²⁰⁶ Set within the context of finding ‘Scottish solutions to Scottish problems’ and the identification of consensus and broad-based collaboration as key characteristics of the campaign for constitutional change, ‘modern government’ is also given a Scottish dimension. Partnership has been developed within a wider New Labour frame of modernising governance and, at the same time, within a Scottish context which has emphasised and practiced a stronger and more meaningful version of participation.

Framing equality

In the opening sections of the *Equality Strategy* the document works to firmly link the prospect for realising a just, inclusive and open Scotland with the elimination of prejudice, discrimination, poverty and alienation. In so doing, the Strategy extends the frame of justice and inclusion to include the promotion of equality between

²⁰³ USGS, 1998, p. 62

²⁰⁴ Mackay and Bilton, 2000, p. 8

²⁰⁵ CoE, 1998, p. 30

²⁰⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1

social groups.²⁰⁷ This extension of the 'social justice' frame is further elaborated in the second section of the *Strategy*, in which the abstract concepts of justice, inclusion and discrimination are linked to the material experiences resulting from the persistence of inequalities in Scotland. Material inequalities must be addressed, as while their causes exist (prejudice, discrimination, poverty, alienation) a just and inclusive society cannot be achieved, therefore those who are concerned with justice and inclusion should also be concerned with group-based inequalities. The Social Justice strategy 'which targets poverty and injustice in each phase of the life cycle [and i]n this way ... intends to stop deprivation becoming a way of life to be passed on through the generations' is concerned with enabling people to play 'a full role in their families, their communities and Scotland'. Its connection with equality comes from the realisation that the root causes of inequality and social injustice are the same – thus promoting social justice 'includes tackling structural inequalities between groups such as women and men, people with disabilities and non-disabled people. The principles of equality opportunities should underpin social justice'.²⁰⁸

Through linking social justice and equality, the document works to establish authority and legitimacy for the approach outlined in the *Equality Strategy*. Further, it demonstrates that following the *Strategy* will enable the Executive to fulfil already existing commitments – 'we want to create a more just Scotland ... where individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential' (Scottish Executive, 1999, p. 11). It also frames equality within a social inclusion agenda in which it is understood to mean the provision of 'equality of opportunity for all', yet, as the *Equality Strategy* itself notes 'Equality is a complex idea'.²⁰⁹

It is also a contested one. In relation to equality between women and men, the question of what equality would look like has been a key debate amongst feminists. In relation to theories of justice, understandings of equality have ranged from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome. The *Equality Strategy* in fact refers to equality both as an issue of opportunity – ensuring equal opportunities for all to fulfil their potential – and as an issue of outcome – ensuring that policy outcomes have an equal impact for different groups or ensure the same outcomes for different

²⁰⁷ Frame extension – depicting interests and frame(s) as extending beyond primary interests to include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents.

²⁰⁸ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 13

²⁰⁹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 11

groups.²¹⁰ In its approach, the Executive 'assumes that it will need to consider' equal treatment, positive action and equality perspective approaches to equality²¹¹ and that it will require awareness of the 'diversity and complexity of needs among different communities'.²¹²

One of the 'key themes' from the consultation exercise reported in the *Equality Strategy* is that 'there is a range of concepts and definitions of equal opportunities, and these should be made clear in the strategy',²¹³ in response, the *Strategy* sets out what it understands by the concept (box 2).

²¹⁰ Due to the reservations of powers to Westminster, possibilities for addressing equality of outcome in monetary terms are restricted, and the government has not elected to use the tax varying powers available. Reservation of Social Security to Westminster further restricts the possibilities for addressing other forms of redistribution necessary to achieve equality of outcome. Comments about the framing of equality need to take these factors into consideration.

²¹¹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p.11

²¹² Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 13

²¹³ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 7

Box 2: Definitions of equal opportunities in the *Equality Strategy* (2000, p.12)

➤ **Equal opportunities**

There was a range of definitions of equal opportunities in the responses to the consultation on the strategy, including 'equality of opportunity', 'equality of outcome', 'equal treatment', 'equity', 'fairness', and 'justice'. The Scottish Executive recognises that equal opportunities can be a broad term with a variety of meanings and that it can mean different things in different contexts.

Encouraging equal opportunities does not always mean treating people the same. It can also mean considering and reflecting difference.

Promoting equal opportunities includes opposing institutional and other forms of discrimination, and promoting participation and inclusion.

Equality of opportunity in employment should be achieved by removing prejudice, bias, or irrelevant criteria that treat some groups of people less favourably than others.

Provision of goods and services should also be free from prejudice and bias. Equality of access and a proper appreciation of the needs and circumstances of particular groups are crucial to equality of service provision. For example, equality of access requires information about services to be produced in appropriate formats. It also requires reasonable adjustments to be made to make sure that buildings are accessible for people with physical disabilities.

For services to be delivered equally and fairly, differences between different groups also need to be taken into account. Currently our knowledge about this differential coverage of service provision and differential impact of policies is relatively limited. As part of mainstreaming equality, mechanisms for analysing differential impact will be developed to reduce inequalities in access to and distribution of services.

Mainstreaming equality means that equality issues should not be addressed as an afterthought or catered for only by specific programmes or initiatives. It means that equality considerations should be taken into account from the outset in all the work of the Executive.

The 'Executive's strategy aims to achieve its vision of a just and inclusive Scotland by': integrating an equality perspective into the work and activities of the Executive; following policies and programmes that seek to address the consequences of discrimination; 'extending ownership' of the strategy to all 'key public, private and voluntary sector bodies, equality specialists, academics and trade unions'; promoting the inclusion of under-represented groups in policy-making, decision-making and public appointments; fostering greater understanding of and respect for 'Scotland's different communities'; educating and raising awareness about discrimination and the need for it to be challenged; and building and

promoting the Executive as an organisation that is 'effective, open and accessible, which broadly reflects the communities it serves and is committed to equality of opportunity'.²¹⁴

By talking specifically about ways in which inequalities are experienced by women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in Scotland, the *Strategy* is able to recognise both 'the differences within and between groups who experience persistent inequalities and discrimination' but also 'some common features'.

Framing mainstreaming

Given the centrality of mainstreaming to the *Equality Strategy*, it receives notably little discussion within the document; just one and a quarter pages from a 40-page publication. The opening paragraph of the section on mainstreaming refers immediately to the consultation on the development of the *Strategy*: '[r]esponses to the consultation document ... supported the strategy of mainstreaming equality. The responses emphasised that the strategy must remain sensitive to the experiences of different groups and acknowledge the need for specialist expertise relevant to the range of groups'.²¹⁵ By this statement, the document is able to allude to a previous discussion of mainstreaming, between the authors of the consultation document and those who responded to it, which enables mainstreaming to be presented in the current document as a strategy commanding consensus. The Executive's definition can then be presented as an outcome of this previous dialogue in consultation: '[a]fter considering these responses, we propose to describe mainstreaming as ...'.²¹⁶

Equally notable is the lack of any reference to other work or sources on mainstreaming, while, to the informed reader, the influences are easily apparent. For example, compare the following definitions of mainstreaming:

Equality Strategy:

Mainstreaming equality is the systematic integration of an equalities perspective into the everyday work of government, involving policy makers across all government departments, as well as equality

²¹⁴ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 16

²¹⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 14

²¹⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 14

specialists and external partners ... Mainstreaming aims to change organisational cultures so that an equalities perspective becomes an integral part.²¹⁷

Learning From Experience:

Mainstreaming equality is essentially concerned with the integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the everyday work of Government and other public bodies from the outset, involving 'every day' policy actors in addition to equality specialists. It is a long-term strategy to frame policies in terms of the realities of people's daily lives, and to change government organisational cultures and structures accordingly.²¹⁸

Mainstreaming is both a specific component of the overall strategy – one of three elements which go towards 'making better policy and providing better services'²¹⁹ – and the overall approach of the strategy, the method of 'linking principles and practice'.²²⁰ While the *Strategy* recognises the importance of legislation, its 'emphasis ... is on what can be done through policy and practice'.²²¹ The rationale for this approach is that legislation alone is not sufficient to achieve social change, and that 'development of practice and policies is crucial to the exercise of rights and the promotion of equal opportunities'.²²² The rationale for the vision of the *Strategy* is developed from several arguments: that it is in keeping with the underpinning principles of the parliament,²²³ that its realisation will be to the benefit of all, giving 'everyone' the opportunity to fulfil their potential,²²⁴ and that failure to create the vision would continue the experience of the effects of inequality and discrimination for many groups.²²⁵ There is also an implicit assumption that justice, inclusiveness and opportunity are indisputable goods in themselves.

²¹⁷ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 14

²¹⁸ Mackay and Bilton, 2000, p. 13

²¹⁹ The other two are 'consultation' and 'research and measurement'.

²²⁰ Scottish Executive, 2000a, pp. 14, 29

²²¹ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 11

²²² Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 11

²²³ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 29

²²⁴ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1

²²⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 9

Conclusions: Frame Conflict?

Throughout the *Strategy*, there is an interesting, and unresolved, tension between a radical feminist inspired approach which recognises the existence of discrimination and structural inequality, and a much more conservative 'modern government' approach based around the belief that providing 'equal opportunities for all' will lead to a more just society. The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that mainstreaming is being developed in the Executive within the framework of social inclusion. This is supported by Clavero and Daly (2002, p. 5) who find that in Scotland 'social inclusion provides the framework within which the implementation of equality initiatives, including gender equality ones, are subsumed'.

Through presenting 'equal opportunities for all' as the key to a 'better Scotland', the *Equality Strategy* re-employs the win-win framing developed in the report of the Group of Specialists. On the other hand, the *Strategy* recognises that 'tackling the barriers of prejudice, discrimination and racial disadvantage' will include 'tackling structural inequalities between groups such as women and men, people with disabilities and non-disabled people'.²²⁶ While it stops short of stating as explicitly as the Group of Specialists did, that these structural inequalities reproduce male domination and female subordination, this is implied in, for instance, its discussion of the material experiences of inequality.

The need for frame alignment sets up the possibility of frame conflict later, when the Executive moves from the statements of intention and principle to implementation and practice. There are indications that participation, consultation and communication are understood within the *Strategy* in a meaningful way. Collaboration is also seen to be a means for the Executive to 'develop more effective and responsive policy and practice.'

Centring on an analysis of the Scottish Executive's *Equality Strategy*, this chapter has explored, through key documents, the processes by which the strategy of mainstreaming was internalised by the Scottish Executive. Following a paper-trail based on the documents named as most significant by the authors of the *Equality Strategy*, the chapter pays particular attention to the framing and re-framing of mainstreaming. It demonstrates the strong connections between the authors of the

²²⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 13

key documents, and provides evidence that the *Equality Strategy* has been importantly informed by these. This raises the question of what happens when a traditional civil service is asked to implement a policy which ultimately aims to undermine the principles on which it operates? In effect this concerns what happens when feminist and what could be termed bureaucratic frames come into contact and perhaps conflict. The next chapter explores this central issue as mainstreaming is applied in practice.

6

Implementation —‘bedding down’ or ‘stuck in the mud’?

Having set out, in the Equality Strategy, its commitment to mainstreaming as the chosen way to achieve its goals with respect to Equality, the Scottish Executive, and the Equality Unit in particular, is now faced with implementing that strategy within the organisation. In so doing, it faces the challenges of pursuing policy innovation within a bureaucratic organisation. Moreover, as mainstreaming aims to change the assumptions upon which policy is made from an equalities perspective, it faces additional challenges stemming from the white, able-bodied, masculine culture of that bureaucracy.

At this point in the development of mainstreaming in Scotland, the key players change. While those prominent in the first phase are often still involved in some way, the actors with most direct involvement become the staff of the Equality Unit and those with Equality remits within other departments of the Scottish Executive (predominantly the two ‘pilot areas’: schools group and housing division).

There is still a need for strategic framing, both in continuing to appeal to the wider vision and goals of government and society, and in persuading departments of the Scottish Executive of the need for, and benefits of, mainstreaming. Framing was found to be a significant element of strategies used to respond to the challenges posed to mainstreaming equalities within the civil service, though it was not acknowledged or recognised as an explicit strategy by those involved, who preferred instead to use what they saw as the less loaded vocabulary of ‘fitting in’.

The position of Equality Unit staff with respect to their persuasive remit is complicated by the antipathy towards advocacy within the UK home civil service (Watson, 1992a, p. 192). This further constrains the possible framings available to

Equality Unit staff, as the promotion of 'sectional' interests is largely unacceptable.²²⁷

The chapter begins with an account of the two mainstreaming pilots, before turning to a discussion of the challenges facing those implementing mainstreaming. This discussion is divided into three sections, the first deals with internal issues, the second with issues arising from joint-working, and the last with issues pertaining to the institutionalisation of mainstreaming. Finally in a discussion of these challenges, the nature of the challenges – whether they are specific to mainstreaming, common to any cross-cutting agenda, or generic to any change agenda within the Executive – will be analysed.

The mainstreaming pilots

Prior to the publication of the Equality Strategy, negotiations between the Head of the Equality Unit and divisional heads in Education Schools Group and Housing Division led to an agreement that two 'mainstreaming pilots' would be launched in these areas. The purpose of the pilots would be to develop 'effective systems and processes' for the mainstreaming of Equality within the Scottish Executive.²²⁸ These two pilots form the basis of my case study of implementation. Within the two pilots it is possible to identify a range of challenges confronting the actors involved. It is possible to draw distinctions between those challenges, or aspects of them, which are specific to the mainstreaming equality agenda, those which would be faced by any cross-cutting agenda, and those which would be common to any change agenda/ new policy initiative within the Scottish Executive, whether cross-cutting or specific. This 'typology' will be used in the discussion of the pilots, and the main body of this chapter will weave insights from interview material into explication of the case studies to illuminate and bring to life the experience of implementing the mainstreaming strategy. I begin with an account of the development of the pilots.

The first thing to note about the pilots, is that there was no explicit plan for *what* work would be carried out under the pilots, nor of *how* such work should be carried

²²⁷ Sawyer (1996, p. 5) similarly finds that the ability of early women's policy machinery in Australia to provide a gendered perspective on government policy was hampered by 'traditional bureaucrats distrust [of] the insertion of what was seen as an advocacy body into a department regarded as providing 'objective' advice on cross-portfolio submissions'.

²²⁸ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 17

out. This was not due to a neglect of planning or preparation per se, but rather to an underlying belief that the pilots needed to be organic, that imposing a 'one size fits all' approach would not work and that the differing contexts and specificities of different divisions necessitated a 'home grown' design of the pilots.

how [the strategy] will be applied in the different areas will be different. Because what Schools are doing and the way they are structured and the way they approach is different from Housing, and is different from different parts of the Executive. So, I don't expect them all to parallel each other and to be the same, and because of that, they will be approached in different ways.²²⁹

The two pilots did develop in different ways. The pilot in Schools Group commenced with discussions of an appropriate form for the pilot, addressing questions of how it should be funded, who should be responsible for the work, how should work be identified, what the relationship between the pilot area and the Equality Unit should be, and so on. As we shall see, these negotiations and re-negotiations were to continue throughout the period of study. These processes of re-negotiation, leading to continual reframings of the policy of mainstreaming, are key to the interest of this chapter.

In contrast, the Housing pilot began with a specific remit and task, and a time pressure for this work that did not leave much space for discussions of form. The initial focus and direction of the Housing pilot was dictated by the immediate work plan of the housing division, and the desire of the minister that equalities be taken into account in that work. The work in question was the drafting of the then Housing Bill; the Minister was Wendy Alexander, Minister for Communities, who had responsibility for equalities as part of her portfolio. At the time that meetings were held between the Equality Unit and the Housing Division to discuss the focus and timing of the pilot a consultation exercise for the Housing Bill was drawing to a close; 'Better Homes for Scotland's Communities — the Executive's Proposals for the Housing Bill' had been published in July 2000. Providing support for the analysis of consultation responses with regard to equality issues was agreed as an initial focus for the pilot. Due to the legislative timetable, the pilot began ahead of schedule in late 2000: with work on the Bill already well under way, there was little time for planning:

²²⁹ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

the Housing one started in a terrible rush because of the housing Act, I was just like, what was one to do. I mean you couldn't work out a plan and I don't know what I would have worked out if I had.²³⁰

Thus at this stage, the two pilots appear opposites, one with no specific work plan or remit, but much discussion about how it should be organised and developed, the other with very little discussion but a definite work context. I shall now look at each in turn.

The Housing Pilot – phase one

The consultation period on the Housing Bill ran from 5th July until 29th September 2000 (eight weeks) and during this time 3,300 copies of the consultation paper, and a further 500 copies of a short summary of the document, were sent out by the Executive. Among those sent copies of the consultation were 'organisations involved in equalities issues'.²³¹ To identify these organisations, the Bill Team had used the database of Positive Action in Housing, a Scotland wide minority-ethnic led charity working in the housing sector "to enable everyone to have an equal chance to live in good quality, affordable and safe homes, free from discrimination and the fear of racial harassment and violence".^{232 233}

The Housing (Scotland) Bill 2001 aimed to 'make provision about housing, including provision about homelessness and the allocation of housing accommodation by social landlords, the tenants of social landlords, the regulation of social landlords, Scottish Homes, the strategic housing functions of the Scottish Ministers and local authorities and grants for improvement and repairs; and for connected purposes' (Housing (Scotland) Bill SP Bill 23B, Session 1 (2001) p. 1). The general policy objectives of the Bill formed part of the Executive's commitment to social justice and strengthening Scotland's communities. The core objective of the Bill was to 'secure a better deal for tenants in the socially rented sector.' (Housing (Scotland) Bill, Policy Memorandum, SP Bill 23-PM, Session 1 (2000) p. 1). The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 as passed would contain provisions covering a number of areas relating to the Executive's overall policy objectives for housing, including

²³⁰ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²³¹ Scottish Executive, 2000b, p. 1

²³² <http://www.paih.org/>

²³³ Information given in Interview 4 (05-02-02).

provisions in relation to homelessness, tenancy rights, regulation of the socially rented sector, and the roles and responsibilities of the Scottish Ministers, local authorities, Scottish Homes and other bodies.²³⁴ The bill was therefore of relevance to equalities in several respects.²³⁵

Due to the strong association of equality within housing with disability issues, widening out the focus from disability to include other equality issues was an issue for those working on the pilot.²³⁶ The policy memorandum accompanying the Housing Bill states that '[t]he Bill proposes a number of institutional reforms to the provision of Scottish housing which will be beneficial to those individuals and groups that have traditionally been at risk of social exclusion, discrimination, prejudice and harassment' (2000, p. 23). The specific aspects of the Bill relating to equality are summarised in Table 3 below.

²³⁴ <http://www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/en2001/2001en10.htm>
Explanatory notes

²³⁵ In addition to issues of provision of specially adapted and accessible housing for people with disabilities which had long been a recognised issue with housing, the following could be identified as relevant areas of concern: housing for lone women (who are relatively constrained in their housing choices); access to housing for women leaving violent relationships; access for ethnic minorities to suitable housing; exclusion of lesbian and gay couples from housing; racial harassment; rights of succession for same sex couples; recognition of status of children not formally adopted or blood related to parents; succession rights for carers (see Gender Audit 2000).

²³⁶ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

Table 3: The Equality Provisions of the Housing Bill

<p>The Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Included a legal right for everyone aged sixteen or over to be admitted to a housing list• Required local authorities to address the equality opportunities needs within their area in drawing up their local housing strategies, and to report on how these have been taken into account within those strategies• Enabled Scottish Ministers to give guidance to local authorities and to registered social landlords on equal opportunities issues and to monitor the application of equal opportunity principles• Made specific provision for the regulation of sites provided for Travellers• Extended the right to buy to all tenants of local authorities and registered social landlords without discrimination (with exemptions for areas of housing pressure in order to help safeguard the provision of social housing for groups which are especially reliant on this sector, and exemptions to protect the provision of housing for those with particular needs)• Introduced a second right of succession for all tenants in the social rented sector (recognising concerns that houses which are particularly suitable for certain tenants should not be passed on to family members who would not otherwise require this type of specialist housing- alternative accommodation could be offered except where individual is spouse or co-habitee)• Included provision for a short Scottish secure tenancy where the use of a full tenancy is not practical in order to move beyond the occupancy agreements or other contractual arrangements which would otherwise have to be used in some specialist housing• Extended the scope of anti-social behaviour as grounds for repossession to protect tenants from racial harassment by neighbours,	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sought to protect interests of individual parties to tenancy agreements, particular in view of problems some people face in the case of relationship breakdown• Provided a right to joint tenancy which will enable partners to enjoy equal protection and entitlement• Recognised as family members children who are considered as such	

During the course of the first phase of the mainstreaming pilot, the Equality Unit was involved in various activities which included: commissioning an audit of equality responses; participation in discussions with Housing and Legal colleagues about aspects of the legislation; attendance at meetings between Housing and the statutory equality bodies; assistance with preparation of the policy memorandum; input to communication and briefings between Housing and the Scottish Parliament on Equalities Issues; ongoing discussion and liaison as was required; sharing information with other Bill teams; identifying areas where other input was required, including training (in general and for Bill teams); and legal input and consultation.

This initial work was very intense with the key liaison person from the Equality Unit working closely with the Bill team. Due to the time pressures, the work was understood as 'crisis point' intervention, but the Bill team was reported to be 'open and ready'.²³⁷ The equality provisions of the Housing Act received positive responses from the main Equality Bodies (Mackay, 2001b). Despite the perception that a lot of work had gone into consultation and attempts to reach those who would be most affected by the issues, just 246 responses were received to the consultation document, of which 25 were from organisations which specifically represented or were working on equality issues in the following areas: older people, children, women, disabled people, race/ethnic minority, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual, Travellers and Carers.²³⁸ It is reported that hardly any of the respondents responded to a specific request for people to provide views from an equalities perspective, and none of the 500 minority ethnic organisations who were sent a summary of the consultation document using the PAIH database responded.²³⁹ There was little sense of what could have been done differently to ensure a greater response.

A report on the responses to the consultation was produced. The summary given for 'equality issues' within that report explicitly mentions only race and disability

²³⁷ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²³⁸ This data was created by identifying equality organisations from the list of respondents in the summary of responses to the consultation document. It is possible that other respondents may also have made comments concerning equality issues.

²³⁹ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

issues, though there is room for other issues to be discussed under further consultation and in relation to stock inequities. The summary given is as follows:

It was proposed that consideration should be given as to how Single Housing Plans could provide a mechanism for local authorities to promote racial equality in housing, and that the Bill should require specific consultation with equalities groups. It was suggested that local authorities should be required to specify inequities in stock such as accessibility of stock, waiting times, etc and how these will be addressed, and that local authorities should have a statutory obligation to procure equality of opportunity for disabled people and their households.

Some of the equality issues raised competed directly with political decisions/priorities and were seen as non-negotiable. Specifically, the criticism of 'right to buy' as adversely impacting on women as a group (as this group would be significantly less able than men as a group to be in a position to exercise this right), was not taken up. While extending the right to buy, the Act also repealed the 'rent to mortgage scheme, lender of last resort and fixed price option provisions', which previously assisted those on low incomes to purchase their homes.²⁴⁰ The level of discount to be applied to the market value of the house was also changed under section 49 of the Act so that the maximum discount was reduced from 60% of the market value of the house to either 35% or £15,000, whichever was less. Further, any previous discounts received by the applicant(s) would be taken into account when calculating a discount, and a new provision in Section 62 makes it 'clear that a previous discount received by two or more persons jointly should be deemed to have been received in equal proportions'²⁴¹ This may also adversely affect women as incomes are not necessarily equally shared within households.

Provision for an exemption from right to buy for areas which Scottish Ministers could designate as 'pressured areas' where housing need outstripped supply was made where right to buy was likely to make the housing shortage worse. This exemption was designed to 'help to safeguard the provision of social housing for groups which are especially reliant on this sector'.²⁴² Such a provision runs the danger that those most dependent on socially rented housing may be concentrated in the most deprived areas with the least opportunities (Gender Audit 2000). Under section 52 of the Act, a duty was placed on Scottish Ministers to provide reports on

²⁴⁰ Explanatory notes relating to Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

²⁴¹ Explanatory notes

²⁴² Policy memorandum p. 23.

the effects and take-up of right to buy. This could be used to measure take-up disaggregated by sex and other equality variables, but it is not stated whether this will be done.

Evaluation of the success of the pilot regarding the Housing Bill is made difficult by factors which affect many cross-cutting initiatives, but also in ways which relate specifically to mainstreaming equality. It is difficult to attribute responsibility for outcomes from the pilot to the pilot specifically; we cannot know what would have happened had there not been a pilot. The time pressure and lack of planning meant that evaluation of the pilot was not given sufficient attention at this point and there was little time for reflection or feedback. Drivers for the equality work in the Bill included the pilot, but also the will of the Minister, who had a social justice remit, and the awareness of the Equal Opportunities Committee in the Parliament.²⁴³ The response of one bill-team member, asked what they thought the impact of the pilot had been, illustrates the difficulty in assessing this:

Most of [the equalities measures] would have happened anyway, whether or not there was a pilot. Well, not all of it would have happened, but quite a lot of it would have happened. I think, because there was a pilot, the Equality Unit took more of an interest in it than they would otherwise have done, because they were taking more of an interest meant we probably took more of an interest. That said I think we would still have done pretty much everything that we did, whether or not the Unit had taken a particular interest in it.²⁴⁴

In addition to the difficulties of separating out causal variables, interview data indicates other factors which made the impact of the pilot harder to assess. This group of factors centred around issues of access, defensiveness and lack of structure and are discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter.

The first phase of the housing pilot came to an end with some concrete positive outcomes in the form of the equality provisions in the Housing Bill, and in the creation of guidance to other Bill teams in integrating equality. Based on the experiences of the housing Bill team, this guidance has been included in the Bill Handbook (which is not in the public domain). Due to the nature of this work, there had been no opportunity to develop more formal structures for the pilot; there 'was

²⁴³ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

²⁴⁴ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

no formal structure within Housing for it ... it was just an informal arrangement'.²⁴⁵ Developing such structures was the aim of the next phase of the pilot.

Housing pilot—phase two

While the initial work on the pilot was dictated by the immediate needs of the Housing Bill, with the work of consultation and drafting completed, the next stage of the pilot was yet to be agreed, and a new focus needed to be drawn up and agreed by the Equality Unit and the Housing Division. Priorities for the Equality Unit at this stage were addressing the post-legislative requirements around the Bill and agreeing a strategic approach to the mainstreaming pilot now that the immediate demands of the Housing Bill had passed. The second stage of the pilot would aim to continue the work of the first stage by developing procedures with relevant bodies for mainstreaming equality into the implementation stage of the Housing Bill. In addition, it aimed to develop a strategy extending the mainstreaming pilot to cover the whole of the Housing Division and to develop an evaluation strategy to enable lessons from the pilot to be shared. The pilot was envisaged as a mechanism both for feeding into wider work on various issues and for taking forward or developing wider agendas through the pilot. Training and evaluation were seen as important aspects of the pilot.

To achieve the aims of the next stage of the pilot would need agreement between the Unit and the pilot area on mechanisms for collaboration and lesson sharing, and Unit staff recognised that flexibility and responsiveness were likely to be essential in this process. Developing a strategy for the next stages of the pilot, and developing an evaluation strategy for that work, however, proved to be a difficult task. Issues of the relative roles and responsibilities of the Unit and the main division — who should take the lead, what each does, who owns the project, how the two work together on it — were all issues which appeared difficult to resolve. The feeling of one Equality Unit member after the initial phase ended was that the pilot needed to be restarted and renegotiated to reach agreement on these issues.²⁴⁶ These issues were often seen as frustrating obstacles, that could be very debilitating, but which should be able to be resolved relatively easily and then great progress could be made. 'All those kind of things need to be discussed and I'm hoping that ... once its

²⁴⁵ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

²⁴⁶ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

sorted, which won't take much, it will be great, I think it could be really innovative.²⁴⁷

These issues persisted though, and combined with changes in personnel and policy priorities served to create a difficult climate in which to make progress with the pilot. Within housing, the change of focus from legislation to the transfer process (the Executive has committed itself to transferring housing stock to community ownership) and the subsequent importance of issues of housing finance, together with the change of structure within Communities Scotland — formerly Scottish Homes — which raised issues about what its remit was, whether it should take more responsibility for regeneration, equality and social inclusion issues, meant that 'the pilot got slightly drowned'.²⁴⁸ At the same time, there was a change of personnel within the Equality Unit, with the member who had been responsible for the Housing pilot leaving the Unit. When the specific work on the Housing Act finished, the pilot seemed to wither. Talk of finding ways of moving work forward seem to concentrate on discussions about appropriate form, gauging state of play, defining what needs to be done, and do not seem to have moved much beyond this. Thus when I conducted my second round of interviews, although the pilot was receiving new attention, ideas for the pilot were still being 'formalised' and negotiated with divisional heads in housing.²⁴⁹

As part of the new push on the pilot, a full time post had been created in May 2003 within housing to work specifically on equalities issues, supported by a third of another post. With the creation of the new post, work began on 'tracking down what's happened in the past' and interviewing people in housing 'to see what they've done'.²⁵⁰ Contact with the Equality Unit appeared to be very casual, there seemed no expectation that there would be regular meetings or dialogue, but rather that housing were 'allowed to get on with our own thing' but 'certainly feel very free to call them and ask them anything'. It was described as 'quite a good line of contact'.²⁵¹ The pilot appeared to be very much back in the initial stages of scoping and thinking about structures and priorities for work. There was no evidence of any substantive work. Attempts to find a secondee from an equalities organisation,

²⁴⁷ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²⁴⁸ Interview 16 (10-12-03)

²⁴⁹ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

²⁵⁰ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

²⁵¹ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

possibly the CRE, to work within Housing as an equalities expert on the pilot also did not materialise. Difficulties for the seconding organisation appear to have been the key factor in this respect.

The Education Pilot

In the previous section, we have seen how the housing pilot moved from a phase of high activity with no time for planning, to one of discussion of strategy and structure but little activity. The Education pilot, in contrast, with no legislative impetus as a focus for initial activity, concentrated on planning and structure from the outset.

As in housing, the Education pilot received Ministerial support and backing at the outset. During the period of initial negotiations about the pilots Jack McConnell held the post of Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs and was publicly supportive of both mainstreaming and equalities issues. In 2001 McConnell was succeeded by Cathy Jamieson, appointed as Minister for Education and Young People. While in interviews with civil servants working on the housing pilot Ministerial will was identified as a key impetus for pilot work, it was not identified by interviewees working on the education pilot.

The mainstreaming pilot in Education was housed within Schools Group, one of three groups within the Education department. Schools group is concerned with 5 – 18 education in schools and itself has five divisions. The pilot was to work across all five divisions. There was an equalities post within Schools group. The post-holder had responsibility for coordinating responses on equality issues, conducting or commissioning research on equalities issues as needed, and was a resource for the mainstreaming pilot, these responsibilities were shared with a remit on health education and health promotion. At the time of the first interviews a new post had recently been created to provide support to the equalities post-holder.

While the Interim Report on the Equality Strategy was able to report on the work on the Housing Bill, work on the Education Pilot in Schools Group was reported to be 'at an early stage' (Scottish Executive, 2001, p. 19). Without the initial impetus of a piece of legislation or similar to focus upon, the pilot never seems to have moved much beyond the initial stages of negotiation: in the Annual Report on the Equality Strategy, published some 18 months later, we read 'the work in this pilot is at an early stage' (2003, p. 15).

The pilot was set up in education to have a small team acting 'almost as an embedded satellite' to the Equality Unit within Education, a structure that had been used successfully in Canada where it is referred to as a 'hub and spokes' system. Lack of training and knowledge, however, as well as a reluctance to see that there were any areas where an equalities focus was necessary, but was not already being applied, hampered progress.

In my first round of interviews, after the 'initial stage' of the pilot, the next stage of work was described as 'to draw up, I suppose, a little mission statement for the rest of the group, to say look we do exist, this is what we're about, this is what we've already been doing, what other support do you think you need?'.²⁵² By the second round of interviews, working out what was needed was still the main focus of work. One actor described the problem as: "the difficulty's really been thinking 'well what do we need, what else do we need to do that we haven't already done? I think we're still working round 'well what precisely does this mean?'.²⁵³ The next stage of the work was thus seen as sitting down with the contact in the Equality Unit 'to review what we've already done, where we are and what else needs to be done that we can start to push forward on'.²⁵⁴ From the Equality Unit side, gaining access to the main division's work was problematic and seemed again to be about control and responsibility 'it seems that people want to have autonomy to ask when they think they need help'.²⁵⁵ On the positive side, there was again the ambition to develop something that would work well with the specific needs of the schools group rather than adopting some standard model. On the downside, this meant that much was still to be agreed and formalised. There was one extremely negative evaluation of the pilot: 'I don't think we have a role, I don't think we have phases and I don't think we have a vision about how the pilots work. I think we have a serious problem with our pilots'.²⁵⁶

As in housing, other changes, and particularly personnel changes, appeared to have affected any development that may have been possible, so that by the second round of interviews, lack of continuity was a key part of the explanation for lack of progress: 'the people have all changed, nobody in the education department knows

²⁵² Interview 8 (13-02-02)

²⁵³ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

²⁵⁴ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

²⁵⁵ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

²⁵⁶ Interview 23 (15-01-02)

education is a pilot'.²⁵⁷ Attempts were underway to 'reinvigorate' the pilot by setting up a meeting between the Head of the Unit and the divisional heads, but the enthusiasm for pilots, which initially had been very strong, seemed to be waning. Within education, engaging on 'specific issues' as opposed to 'process systems' (as the pilot was seen) was favoured as a way of promoting work that would have a measurable impact. Within the Equality Unit, the term pilot was increasingly seen as 'unhelpful' as it suggested a more formal testing out of a specific initiative under controlled conditions than had ever been intended: 'there are areas where we've tended to focus what we're doing but I don't know that we have had a toolkit or piece of guidance that we have piloted and then amended'.²⁵⁸ Both pilots were seen to be 'in a reflective stage',²⁵⁹ with decisions needed about how to continue and whether pilots should be made more formal.

Positive Steps

It is also important to highlight the positive progress that has been made by the Executive within the constraints that have been identified. In particular, the achievements resulting from work on the Housing Bill (now Act) should not be overshadowed by wider issues with the pilots. In addition, several commentators have noted that many of the building blocks for mainstreaming are now in place in the Scottish Executive. The provision of resources, in terms of finance and staffing, are one of the key indicators of political and bureaucratic recognition and commitment to different policy agendas. The Unit itself has grown steadily both in staff numbers and in resources, and this has enabled the creation of a dedicated mainstreaming branch within the Unit, which was joined in December 2004 by a parallel post in the Equalities Research Team. The creation of an Equalities Research Team to work alongside the policy unit is a further indication of the continuing importance the Executive attaches to equality issues, and has led to the development of a Mainstreaming Equality Website as a resource for colleagues throughout the Executive. This is potentially a very useful tool to aid the mainstreaming of equality in policy development providing cross-referenced information and examples of equality issues by policy area and equality group. It

²⁵⁷ Interview 13 (02-12-03)

²⁵⁸ Interview 12 (21-11-03)

²⁵⁹ Interview 10 (20-11-03)

also contains a 'Mainstreaming Equality Toolkit (Researcher's Guide)' as well as definitions of equality and mainstreaming and links to useful sources. The extent of use of the website is not-known, but web-based resources generally are increasingly used throughout the Executive.

Statistics, research and the routine disaggregation of data by equality groups have been highlighted in the international literature and in home-grown reports such as *Learning from Experience* as key prerequisites for mainstreaming. Again the Scottish Executive record in this respect is positive (Mackay, 2001b; Breitenbach, 2004; Mackay et al, 2003b). Overall, commitment to mainstreaming and equality within the Scottish Executive was seen to be strong and growing, and to be reflected in the growing resources for the unit. Levels of confidence of success for mainstreaming amongst those interviewed also increased between the two rounds of interviews.

Despite these positive developments, it is still hard to identify the impact of mainstreaming in many areas of the Executive, both in terms of changes in working practice and in concrete outcomes. As has been noted elsewhere (Mackay and Bilton, 2000), mainstreaming activity remains in 'pockets' within the organisation. One explanation for this would be to refer to the long-term nature of the mainstreaming strategy. Changing ways of thinking and promoting cultural change within a large institution so that equality will be integrated into all aspects of its work are not aims that can be achieved overnight. Interviewees expressed a good understanding of the challenges that would face them in this project, and there has always been recognition that the aims are long-term and that outcomes will be hard to identify. Nonetheless the lack of progress, particularly in the pilots, but also more generally, needs explaining. To aid us in developing such an explanation, we turn to participants' accounts of the challenges they faced.

The Challenges of mainstreaming

Many of the issues discussed here in relation to mainstreaming are also pertinent to social policy more generally, for example, problems of non-implementation. The general issues raised are particularly typical of those faced by marginal policy areas, for example concerning lack of institutional power or problems of de-prioritisation. The irony that the issues of marginality are so significant for a policy of mainstreaming should not be missed. Participants identified a range of challenges they faced in implementing the mainstreaming strategy. While there were many

common themes, not all participants agreed on all of the challenges; some saw some as more important than others, and in some cases disagreed that a factor named by other participants was in fact a challenge at all.²⁶⁰ In several cases, challenges could be described as 'double-edged swords' providing opportunities as well as challenges.²⁶¹ As said above, some of these challenges can be understood as pertaining specifically to mainstreaming equality, others to cross-cutting agendas more widely, and a third set to any new policy implementation. In most cases, specific challenges operated at two or three of these levels simultaneously. Because of this overlap, the following section is structured by the situation in which the challenge occurred,²⁶² their relationship to the typology just described being drawn out in the discussion that follows.

***"It is easy to give a definition, what is really hard is to say how to do it"*²⁶³**

The problem of moving from theory to practice is well noted in the literature on mainstreaming as well as in policy literature more widely. Authors comment on a plethora of definitions (Woodward, 2001), confusion over what mainstreaming is (Mossink, 2000), and a paucity of case studies and practical examples (Mackay and Bilton, 2000). Within the Executive, those working on mainstreaming felt that they had a clear definition, which all would share, and which came from the *Equality Strategy*. The issue of competing or differing definitions was not seen as a significant problem.²⁶⁴ In contrast, confusion over what mainstreaming 'was' i.e. what the definition would mean 'in practice', was rife, and the paucity of case studies was keenly felt; the agenda was seen as 'woolly, lacking in specification'.²⁶⁵ This left those in the Equality Unit, and those working on the mainstreaming pilots, in the position of feeling they knew what they were aiming to achieve, but not how to get

²⁶⁰ Most significantly in relation to turnover, discussed later.

²⁶¹ For example with turnover, and also the lack of a blueprint as discussed below.

²⁶² While there was a specific question in the interviews about the challenges faced, material on this subject was not restricted to answers to this question, and in fact much was said throughout the interviews that is drawn upon here.

²⁶³ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

²⁶⁴ Though interviewee 3 did acknowledge that previous experience of 'mainstreaming' strategies in local government level, where the concept was often used to disband women's committees, still coloured some people's reactions to the strategy

²⁶⁵ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

there.²⁶⁶ In order to address this, interviewees wanted guidelines on 'the practicalities of how to actually apply the principles',²⁶⁷ and 'concrete discussions with people in the same situation'.²⁶⁸ Chiefly, they needed some way of translating the principles enshrined in the definition into a form that would enable them to understand what actions to take: 'we have all the paper based stuff and what it means, but we need more of a practical understanding'.²⁶⁹

In addition to the lack of concrete examples, the absence of any significant training on mainstreaming was cited as a hindrance to developing a practical understanding.²⁷⁰ It had been hoped that training on mainstreaming equality would be run for all Executive staff but due to the practicalities of running training on this scale training on mainstreaming was delivered as part of a diversity training package with the consequence that it was not as in-depth as had originally intended.

The mainstreaming pilots were designed with the recognition that the Executive needed to find its own answers to 'how to' mainstream equality. These two projects, it was hoped, would provide examples that could be used to inform the development of the strategy across the Executive. As we have seen above, it proved very difficult to produce any concrete examples from them.²⁷¹ The pilots were dogged by the same difficulties as those facing the Equality Unit. A constant puzzling over what the pilots should be and do was an impediment to action. The lack of a practical understanding of mainstreaming explains, in part at least, the early focus of the pilots on these issues. It cannot by itself explain their persistence. Why did the key question remain 'what exactly does this mean, and what do we need to do'?²⁷² From the interviews, it is clear that a major obstacle to developing case studies or creating opportunities for discussions about how different people were tackling the problems of implementation was the lack of opportunity for feedback and learning:

²⁶⁶ Though as discussed below, on further interrogation, the goal itself also proved to be a source of anxiety. Thus the goal of achieving the definition of mainstreaming given in the *Equality Strategy* was 'known', but what the definition 'actually meant', and therefore what this goal meant, was less clear.

²⁶⁷ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

²⁶⁸ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²⁶⁹ Interview 19 (18-12-03)

²⁷⁰ Interview 19 (18-12-03), Interview 13 (02-12-03)

²⁷¹ Though the input into good practice guidelines on consultation and on mainstreaming guidelines for bill teams should not be ignored.

²⁷² Interview 8 (13-02-02)

How do you take the leap from these questions [in the guidance] to what you're actually doing when you're sitting at your desk ... nobody records what they've done, the recording isn't important, but we need a way of sharing what *we actually do when we're confronted with these questions*, how do you take processes and make them real?²⁷³

In turn, the main cause of this was seen as the huge workloads and time pressures, which meant there was 'not enough time, day-to-day, to lift our heads and find out what other people are doing, and what lessons can be learnt'.²⁷⁴ This was a problem within the Unit, with individuals working in different equality areas not being aware of what their colleagues were doing. There was 'no overview of how the different approaches fit together',²⁷⁵ and a need for greater 'sharing of learning and developing expertise, across groups, and across the Unit'.²⁷⁶ There were two factors seen as constraining this sharing, the first internal – the volume of work, and the second external – the difference in the agendas of the different equality groups and differences between their corresponding external organisations. These internal and external factors combined with the result that there 'was not much overlap in the office between the different areas'.²⁷⁷ The merging of the statutory equality bodies, the CRE, EOC and DRC into a single equality body was thought to be a positive force in this respect, weakening the external factors militating against overlap.²⁷⁸

Sharing learning between the two pilots was also problematic with little knowledge in each of what was happening in the other: 'we're so busy ... don't often have time to look around and see what's happening elsewhere ... I don't really know how the housing pilot worked'.²⁷⁹ The relationship between the Unit's work and external research and expertise was characterised by a 'lack of time to think, reflect, and revisit research'.²⁸⁰ Difficulties in learning created a significant down-side to the open experimental approach developed in response to the 'lack of something telling us what to do'.²⁸¹ Staff were working very hard to find ways forward, but without

²⁷³ Interview 15 (10-12-03), my emphasis

²⁷⁴ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

²⁷⁵ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²⁷⁶ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

²⁷⁷ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

²⁷⁸ Though it is important to note that there are also fears that the creation of a single body could lead to a hierarchy of inequalities which may thus result in some 'equality groups' being 'lost' within the wider body unless there is sufficient theoretical understanding of the links and differences between different systems of inequality.

²⁷⁹ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

²⁸⁰ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²⁸¹ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

the feedback and evaluative loops, they were often in the dark about what effect they were having:

it's like you're a wee mole or something digging away, chucking stuff up, but have no idea what's happening, whether it's working or not, and I don't think that maybe anybody in the unit could take that role to that extent.²⁸²

There was a level of trust that the Head of Unit would have such an overview, and be able to use this to direct work in the various areas: 'the only place that this can happen is at Head of Unit level',²⁸³ but as the above quote indicates, even the head of unit's ability to do this was constrained by the demands of time and workload.²⁸⁴ The importance of feedback as a factor was brought home again when interviewees were asked what they hoped the present research might provide that would be of use to them. All cited some form of feedback, either in terms of evaluation of how work in the Executive fared in comparison to elsewhere: 'how Scotland compares to the rest of the world'²⁸⁵; 'outsiders' external assessments: 'insight, perceptions, views about what's happening, where we are'²⁸⁶ or what lessons they could learn from elsewhere.

A connected problem was the dearth of opportunities to 'theorise what the unit is doing'²⁸⁷ which could be obtained through engaging with external perspectives, and thinking reflectively to develop a better theoretical understanding of what it was trying to achieve. While the cry was often for practical examples and the belief was that the principles were clear, this suggests that theorization may be necessary in order to develop practical knowledge.

To some extent, the lack of overview and feedback resulted not only from time and work pressures, but from the decision that the context required an open, flexible and adaptive response which could not be prescribed. This decision was in turn influenced by the belief that there were no blueprint examples which could be adopted and implemented by the Executive, due, firstly to the paucity of case

²⁸² Interview 1 (17-01-02)

²⁸³ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

²⁸⁴ The lack of sharing between those with responsibility for different equality areas within the Unit had implications for work on multiple discrimination. In general, multiple discrimination was seen as more complicated than 'equality', and work on this was seen as something which needed happen, but which was not possible yet. Interview 19 (18-12-03).

²⁸⁵ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

²⁸⁶ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

²⁸⁷ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

studies of mainstreaming: it was a 'broad and uncharted' area,²⁸⁸ and, secondly to the unique position of the Executive. The Executive was seen as less compartmentalised than the UK administration, and mainstreaming as necessarily less concerned with fiscal policy.²⁸⁹ In addition, the decision of the Executive to adopt an 'equality' rather than 'gender' mainstreaming approach was seen to set it apart from previous mainstreaming strategies so that 'there was not the same experience to draw upon'.²⁹⁰

The pilots, which aimed to identify ways of mainstreaming, did not escape the spiralling concern over what this would mean. The lack of opportunities for feedback, learning, evaluation and theoretical development identified here help to explain why this was so. As the next section demonstrates, work in the pilots was also constrained by factors relating to joint working.

***Working with others – 'the biggest issue is getting people to think this is a question they should ask'*²⁹¹**

Moving away from the difficulties the Unit faced internally with mainstreaming, we look at the problems the Unit encountered when they extended that work within the Unit in collaboration with other parts of the office.

While the Equality Unit was committed to equality work as its core activity, for the other divisions and departments with which it worked equality was usually a secondary concern. In some cases it was not seen as a concern at all. Thus gaining recognition of the relevance of equality to work in other policy areas,²⁹² and getting those policy areas to take ownership of this work,²⁹³ was a challenge even before the 'how to do it' questions could be asked.²⁹⁴ In the pilot areas this resulted in difficulties in gaining access to work and in agreeing roles and responsibilities for the Unit and the main policy area.

²⁸⁸ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

²⁸⁹ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

²⁹⁰ Interview 6 (07-02-02)

²⁹¹ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

²⁹² Interview 5 (05-02-02)

²⁹³ Interview 5 (05-02-02) and 1 (17-01-02)

²⁹⁴ As we will see the two are interrelated. It was partly the different / underspecified nature of mainstreaming work which 'turned off' policy staff.

Garnering recognition and acceptance for mainstreaming was made significantly more difficult by competition within the Executive for both time and resources. In a context where 'since devolution, the workload has gone up exponentially, and the people to do it haven't',²⁹⁵ staff were 'overload conscious',²⁹⁶ and mainstreaming work had to 'compete to get to the top of someone's work pile'.²⁹⁷ In this competition, mainstreaming was at the disadvantage of requiring innovation in working methods, and innovation was harder at a time when there was already significant pressure.²⁹⁸ Policy colleagues had to manage a balance between equalities and the 'main focus' of their work²⁹⁹ in which equalities was often seen as 'second to what people are doing'.³⁰⁰ This 'balancing act' and the subsequent de-prioritisation were seen as a pragmatic response to time and resource issues, and in one case, as the proper response to democratic accountability – to prioritise equality to the extent that the core work of the department received less time, would be to interfere with the mandate of the Minister as given by the electorate.³⁰¹ Pragmatism therefore worked to obscure de-prioritisation which sat uncomfortably with the Executive's and Parliament's claim that equality will be at the heart of all its work.

As with Equality Unit staff, the time and work pressured environment in which policy staff operated curtailed their opportunities for engaging with mainstreaming reflectively, and for developing a 'deep' understanding of what it would mean. Faced with the need to take on a new aspect of work, policy staff wanted to be given the tools to do it, not to worry about why. A distinction was drawn in this respect between the Equality Unit staff and 'normal' civil servants, who as one respondent put it, 'famously want to be told what to do'.³⁰² Thus when told they needed to consider equalities, the response was "just tell me what to do and I'll go and do it", and when you say well you should mainstream equalities, the next question is 'well how do I do that?'.³⁰³ Another respondent spoke at length about the differences they saw between the two 'types' of civil servants:

²⁹⁵ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

²⁹⁶ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

²⁹⁷ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

²⁹⁸ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

²⁹⁹ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁰⁰ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³⁰¹ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁰² Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³⁰³ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

There's a very different need for mainstream policy makers than for the relative specialists like us in the Equality Unit, who probably yes need to know what's happened elsewhere and to know where best practice is and so on, and be ready to convey that, to act as guardians, if you like, of the theology, whereas I think the practitioners on the ground don't necessarily need to know, they need to know that it is there, and that there is something solid behind what you are telling them, but they actually only want to be told what to do, basically.³⁰⁴

Lack of understanding for what mainstreaming would require them to do was offered as the key reason why staff may be resistant to mainstreaming work 'any reluctance stems from a sense of not knowing what it will entail, it's like, we need to do this, how do we do this? And who's going to hold my hand?'.³⁰⁵ Given the previously discussed difficulties in developing practical understanding, this is obviously a difficult problem to solve. Sensitive to the pressures on their overworked colleagues, Equality Unit staff saw their key challenge as 'making it real' which involved breaking the agenda 'down into bite-sized chunks', 'distilling it down to fundamentals and serving it up on a plate'.³⁰⁶

The Unit's sensitivity was no doubt borne out of understanding and sympathy for the pressure faced by their colleagues, but it was also a pragmatic response to a lack of institutional power. Without the legislative push that the Race Relations Amendment Act would bring for development of race equality schemes,³⁰⁷ Equality Unit staff had to 'come in the right way at the right time' ... 'be sensitive to policy processes and cultures' ... 'not tailoring what you want to achieve but very much looking at what's effective'.³⁰⁸ The importance of getting colleagues 'on-side' necessitated working in a way 'which was helpful rather than creating an extra burden'.³⁰⁹ The supportive and encouraging approach adopted by the Unit was preferred to the demanding as it was thought that this way would be more likely to achieve real change; it was also the only option given that there were no sanctions to hand.

³⁰⁴ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁰⁵ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³⁰⁶ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁰⁷ These would also be used as a steer for other equality work.

³⁰⁸ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³⁰⁹ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

The 'time lag' between policy implementation and 'change on the ground',³¹⁰ perceived as a characteristic of mainstreaming, was seen as a contributory factor in the difficulties of persuading colleagues of the relevance of mainstreaming. It made the case for resources harder to make, as what the 'resource will be in relation to the output' was difficult to work out.³¹¹ The resource – output issue taps into a division one respondent felt between the 'process-oriented' nature of the Equality Unit's focus, and the 'specific issue' interest of main divisions/ departments.³¹² Concentrating on processes was seen as an unhelpful diversion from doing work which would have practical benefits or would make a difference and have results. Results-focussed work was also easier to measure and therefore claim successes for. In contrast, process-focussed work was sometimes equated with pointless form-filling.

Discomfort with process-oriented work was also displayed in the definitions of success for mainstreaming given in interviews with those in pilot areas. The replies demonstrated a difficulty in thinking about how mainstreaming would affect the internal practices of the Executive, with responses often focussing on specific outcome measures, over which the Executive would often have no control: for example, choice of ethnically sensitive food on school menus or the end of race-riots. While these answers displayed a desire that mainstreaming within the Executive would affect wider social change, they also displayed a lack of understanding of the process-oriented nature of the mainstreaming strategy as it related to policy-making. In some cases it was very difficult to get interviewees to talk about mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive, and answers often related to external partners, or when they were internal, focussed on human resources issues.

In addition to increasing workloads, the period since devolution was also one seen as marked by significant change, with various different change agendas being pushed at the same time. In many ways the wider change agendas were seen as helpful, something that mainstreaming could latch on to and to some extent hide within. But these changes also created pressure and, combined with work loads and

³¹⁰ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³¹¹ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³¹² Interview 13 (02-12-03)

the lack of institutional power discussed above, meant that 'there are times when you daren't ask your colleagues for a contribution'.³¹³

Within this context, other sources of support for mainstreaming became especially important. The support of the Minister was cited as the determining factor in why equality work on the housing Bill happened, and support of individual Ministers was very important in giving clout to the requests of the Equality Unit.³¹⁴ The role of lobbying in moving issues higher up ministerial and official agendas was also noted.³¹⁵ The importance of political will for successful mainstreaming is noted in much of the literature on mainstreaming (see for example, Mackay and Bilton, 2000), and is supported by the interviews. In the words of one interviewee:

Civil servants are basically pragmatic and cynical people, and you have to remember that, and it's no good appealing to them in terms of better nature type arguments, you have to persuade them that it's important because other people, who are important, think it's important.³¹⁶

Personal relationships and individuals also took on increased significance in this context. Equality staff had to develop and manage good personal relationships with other individuals, be sensitive both to cultural differences in different areas, and to the complexities of the policy processes, 'working out how to fit in' with these.³¹⁷ The high degree of individual autonomy above B2 level to influence policy added to the sense in which mainstreaming was seen as 'highly dependent on personal relationships' and 'on particular individuals'.³¹⁸ It was dependent on the existence of 'champions' for mainstreaming, of good relationships between Unit staff and staff in main divisions, and also on individuals not obstructing the work.

Given the importance of particular individuals and of personal relationships, turnover of posts within the Executive — commonly between 18 months and 2 years (though currently being extended) — would seem an obvious obstacle to mainstreaming. Two respondents did see this as the case: 'continuity of personnel, what happens when people move on' was seen as one of the 'key issues'³¹⁹ by the

³¹³ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³¹⁴ Interview 12 (21-11-03) and 5 (05-02-02)

³¹⁵ Interview 13 (02-12-03)

³¹⁶ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³¹⁷ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³¹⁸ Interview 2 (17-01-02) and 4 (05-02-02)

³¹⁹ Interview 16 (10-12-03)

first and for the second 'turnover create[d] massive difficulties for equality',³²⁰ 'there can be a real problem with continuity, that the people that made the original agreement are no longer there' to the extent that 'the people have all changed ... no one knows there is a pilot'.³²¹ Most interviewees, however, either denied that turnover was a significant issue, or saw it as providing benefits, in the form of mainstreaming by proxy, which were as significant as the drawbacks. The following comment is typical of this form:

Yeah, I'm still in two minds about this, I still think, there's still a problem, on one level about developing sufficient expertise and understanding, however, the other side of the coin is that if there are enough people exposed to a mainstreaming sort of thought who then take that experience elsewhere, you have a system of mainstreaming anyway. So, perhaps the moving around, providing you can provide education and training and a different way of thinking, means that people will take that experience with them.³²²

For those who did not see any problem, the idea of the generalist civil servant as able to apply a range of skills in any given area was important:

it's exactly the same as you do in any part of the Executive, you come in with a set of competencies and skills and you apply them to a different set of rules and boundaries and professional requirements. And I don't think moving into an area where equal opportunities is a focus is any more difficult than moving into an area where you're dealing with rural affairs and you've never done it before, it's, you've got a learning curve. So I don't think it impacts.³²³

These three differing opinions on the importance of turnover demonstrate differing underlying beliefs about the extent to which equality demands any different kind of knowledge/experience from other policy areas, the amount of understanding sufficient to be able to usefully work on mainstreaming, and the attachment to the idea of generalism versus expertise. These issues will be taken up in the following chapter. Comparing the statements with the experience of the pilots appears to lend support for the view that turnover matters. Change of personnel was a key reason why work had taken a long time to get going – with time needed for new members to 'get up to speed' — and also why pilot agreements needed to be renegotiated and commitments re-stated. It also impacted on the relationships that were built up

³²⁰ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³²¹ Interview 13 (02-12-03)

³²² Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³²³ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

between individuals (though this could also be positive with good relationships carrying over from other areas). Explanations for the mis-match, between the difficulties expressed in relation to the pilot work and the perception that turnover was not really a significant problem, can perhaps be explained by the normality of high turnover and the continuing attachment to the concept of the generalist civil servant within the civil service. Thus while suggesting that people generally pick up jobs fairly quickly, one respondent then went on to talk about a colleague who had been in post 18 months and 'he's been functioning all that time, but he's been, it's so much about meeting people and the contacts, and building relationships ... and that's always going to take time'³²⁴ and another, while saying they didn't see turnover as an issue, described how pilot work had been put on hold while a new colleague got up to speed over a period of about four months.³²⁵ For both, these experiences were 'normal' and therefore not seen as problematic.

Turnover also impeded building sufficient expertise and understanding of mainstreaming and equalities, especially given difficulties reported in getting a training programme on mainstreaming that could be run Executive-wide.

Most of the issues discussed so far in the section have related in some way to the nature of mainstreaming equality itself. Another sub-category of challenges related to relations between divisions/ departments more generally and centred around issues of roles, responsibilities, access, control, defensiveness and openness. Thus a key factor in getting agreement on the form the pilots should take was who should have responsibility for the pilot, what the respective roles of the Unit and the main division should be and who should pay for it.³²⁶

Defensiveness was evident in an unwillingness to admit to any areas in which work on equality could be improved (which also fed into difficulty of understanding what mainstreaming would require – 'what should we do we haven't already done?').³²⁷ This was picked up on by Equality Unit staff with the effect that they became worried about 'pre-empting' work in the main divisions and 'assuming they knew anything more about mainstreaming' than their colleagues. It is of course

³²⁴ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³²⁵ It was also clearly based upon a rejection of the idea that equality was in anyway 'special' or different to any other policy area, and that there are problems with generalism – I discuss this more in chapter 6.

³²⁶ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³²⁷ Interview 8 (13-02-02)

possible that the pilot areas did in fact have little room for improvement, but this seems unlikely given that most staff in those areas had no previous experience of working on equality issues, that equality was often seen as secondary to the core work of the division/ department, and that most staff still professed to need training in mainstreaming and equality. It appears that the nervousness around making assumptions was based on a knowledge that access to policy areas could easily be 'closed down'. One interviewee commented that gaining access to work of main division was problematic as 'people want to have the autonomy to ask when they need help – they control the access'.³²⁸

Institutionalising mainstreaming – “you hope it becomes part of what they do”

The aim of mainstreaming strategies is that equality will become embedded in the day-to-day work of an organisation, in all areas. They aim to institutionalise the practice of integrating an equalities perspective so that it is an expected part of work. In her article looking at the possibilities for institutionalising gender equality through the use of quotas, Inhetveen argues that for a new practice to become institutionalised it needs to be sympathetic to the 'cultural launching values' of the organisation in which it is being introduced (1999, p. 403). Inhetveen further argues that the goal of institutional innovation, namely to create new routine-reproduced, taken-for granted behaviour patterns (institutionalisation) is the very opposite of the 'routinized enacting' or mobilisation around a new practice required to establish it (1999, p. 403).

Inhetveen's work is interesting in connection with the institutionalisation of mainstreaming in the Executive in several respects. Firstly, while there are problems with her analysis of the importance of 'cultural launching values',³²⁹ the 'fit' between mainstreaming and existing organisational /institutional culture appears an important factor in the institutionalisation of mainstreaming: 'We tend to, phrase, frame it in, this is about better policy making, it's about modernising government, it's about making public services more – delivering to the people, it's in line with all these kinds of policy objectives which were already part of the Executive's

³²⁸ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³²⁹ Where do these come from? are they immutable? Are they not themselves institutions?

commitments'.³³⁰ Secondly, Inhetveen's description of the goal of institutional innovation as 'routinized and taken-for granted' behaviour patterns fits very closely with interviewees' accounts of their aims for institutionalised mainstreaming: 'you just hope it becomes part of what they do, people don't even think about it anymore, they just get on with it'.³³¹ Thirdly, the opposition between mobilisation and institutionalisation is useful in explaining interviewees' desire to make mainstreaming appear 'an easily integrated part of [the] work, that it doesn't actually require you to do things completely differently, or do something very, very differently'.³³²

Many of the factors discussed in the previous two sections are obviously relevant to the issue of institutionalising mainstreaming. Institutionalising a new agenda is harder when it is not clear what the practical implications of that agenda will be, and the same is the case when workloads and time pressures are high, and when access can be controlled.

In addition, interviewees commented on various institutional factors, such as the size of the organisation, the weight of a history of ways of doing things and the complexities of the policy process, which they often saw as relating not just to equality, but to any change agenda 'it's not just an issue about equality, it's a huge organisation with a very long history of ways of doing things and changing that is very hard'.³³³

Of these, the complexities of the policy process received most attention, The complex and non-uniform nature of the policy process, or processes, with their 'open and closed points'³³⁴ and the importance of differing cultures within these, combined with the factors discussed above, led to an importance of, and in some cases, reliance on personal relationships as a way of getting work done. The absence of a rational system into which mainstreaming could be integrated, and thereby institutionalised, was perceived as a problem by interviewees. The policy process was in fact policy processes,³³⁵ much policy making was done on the hoof and on a

³³⁰ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³³¹ Interview 11 (21-11-03)

³³² Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³³³ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³³⁴ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³³⁵ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

very short timescale,³³⁶ it was 'messy',³³⁷ with 'no obvious, clear system into which to insert equality'.³³⁸

In its 'transformative' reading, mainstreaming was perceived as a challenge to the essence of the institution: the Executive was seen as a 'big bureaucracy with a long history of strong forces of static friction and inertia, which makes transformative policy difficult'.³³⁹ Interviewees' were split on whether they believed that mainstreaming was being pursued as a transformative or an integrationist approach within the Executive.³⁴⁰ While some interviewees maintained they would not be interested if the approach was not transformative, the majority believed that at present the approach was integrationist, with the aim of transformation at a later date.³⁴¹ That 'bureaucracies are more comfortable with an incremental, step at a time approach',³⁴² explained the integrationist character of the strategy at this stage. The respondent who felt it was paramount that the strategy should be transformative, also felt that an integrationist approach was no challenge to the Executive and would be easily assimilated, 'process based approaches are not particularly challenging for an organisation that is highly bureaucratic, it creates an extra bureaucracy, you just set up a new bureaucracy to deal with it'.³⁴³

The idea that (transformative) mainstreaming was at odds with the ethos of the Executive is supported by the unease that some respondents reported when faced with equality issues. Unlike other cross-cutting agendas, equality was 'contestable', it could feel 'intangible' to people³⁴⁴ and it was hard to know if they had got it right. There was 'always a fear that you're making assumptions, and you can't go round and ask everybody',³⁴⁵ people found it challenging because 'they don't understand it, or they're frightened, or frightened of getting it wrong'³⁴⁶ and 'some people have

³³⁶ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³³⁷ Interview 6 (07-02-02)

³³⁸ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³³⁹ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁴⁰ The transformative/integrationist distinction comes from the work of Jahan (1995) in which she talks about agenda-setting and integrationist versions of mainstreaming.

³⁴¹ One exception to this was the interviewee who believed that mainstreaming was not and should not be transformative, as this would give it undue importance (Interview 4 (05-02-02)).

³⁴² Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁴³ Interview 13 (02-12-03)

³⁴⁴ Interview 11 (21-11-03)

³⁴⁵ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³⁴⁶ Interview 11 (21-11-03)

a nagging doubt at the back of their mind of what if we've forgotten somebody and how do we find out until we get criticised'.³⁴⁷ Unlike other agendas, mainstreaming equality was 'about people's own identity and beliefs'³⁴⁸ and challenged them in ways other agendas did not; it dealt with personal reasons, feelings around equality issues, and fear 'of the unknown'.³⁴⁹

This form of challenge was not one civil servants were receptive to: 'civil servants don't want to deal with the awkward, or the difficult, or radical, or out of the ordinary run of things'.³⁵⁰ Thus there was evidence in the interviews of a fairly strong clash between the transformative aims and requirements of mainstreaming and the 'normal' working culture within the Executive.

This difference was expressed by one interviewee as a difference between 'equalities people' who talked 'ideal world' and mainstream policy makers who were 'so set in the real world they couldn't understand where they were trying to get in an ideal world'.³⁵¹ Other tensions between the two 'cultures' were expressed in the desire from policy staff for 'snappy guidance',³⁵² 'the two page guide to mainstreaming'³⁵³ and the realisation of equality staff that mainstreaming required 'a lot of basic information' and 'an understanding of the dynamics of equality and discrimination'.³⁵⁴

A lack of knowledge about and understanding of systems of inequality, as much as of mainstreaming, often underpinned these fears. Equality was still understood by many as sameness³⁵⁵ and in other cases as neutrality, thus it could be difficult to get Bill teams to celebrate successes for equal opportunities resulting from their legislation — there was a tendency to write that there were no implications rather than that there were positive ones.³⁵⁶ The lack of familiarity with and experience in equality issues created a barrier to the integration of an equality perspective across

³⁴⁷ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

³⁴⁸ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³⁴⁹ Interview 6 (07-02-02)

³⁵⁰ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁵¹ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁵² Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³⁵³ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁵⁴ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³⁵⁵ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁵⁶ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

the Executive 'many civil servants, their whole working experience has been within the civil service, so how will [equality] get into the system?'³⁵⁷

Given the unease with which mainstreaming was met or, to use Inhetveen's terminology, the disjuncture between mainstreaming and the 'cultural launching values' of the Scottish Executive, Equality Unit staff had to continually mobilise around mainstreaming. In an attempt to reduce resistance to this mobilisation, they stressed the similarities between mainstreaming and existing agendas and values. Thus mainstreaming work was continually framed and reframed so as to preserve its malleability and 'fit' with existing cultures. This, I argue, explains the continual negotiation and re-negotiation and the preoccupation with working out 'what mainstreaming means' that dogged the two mainstreaming pilots.

Managing frame conflict

At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that the challenges facing those implementing the mainstreaming strategy within the Scottish Executive could be placed within a typology based upon distinctions between those challenges, or aspects of them, which are specific to the mainstreaming equality agenda, those which would be faced by any cross-cutting agenda, and those which would be common to any change agenda/ new policy initiative within the Scottish Executive, whether cross-cutting or specific. Many of the challenges discussed operated on more than one level at a time.

Thus workload, time pressure and resource constraints are issues throughout the Executive, which affect all staff and all areas of work, and which would be expected to increase the difficulties facing any attempt at policy innovation. Challenges posed by mainstreaming equality to the 'culture' of the Executive and the values of the 'normal' civil servant, are in contrast specific to the substantive area. Issues of roles and responsibilities, access and openness in joint-working will be common to most cross-cutting initiatives.

It is the interplay between these factors that is particularly debilitating for mainstreaming. Time pressure and workload are especially crippling when they can be used as pragmatic excuses to avoid work which challenges cultural values; policy

³⁵⁷ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

innovation is harder in times of pressure. Faced with these multiple challenges, members of the Equality Unit responded with three key strategies: flexibility, opportunism and assimilation.

Flexibility was seen as perhaps the only possible response to a situation in which there was no prescribed path: 'a diverse approach is essential, because there's nothing telling us what to do, so if we all know the way different things work, and try it out, then that's great',³⁵⁸ in which systems were unscientific and unpredictable, and in which there was little knowledge about 'what works': 'if its going to be tuned in, if you're really serious about overlaying and interweaving, then its got to be flexible enough to interweave in what is effectively not a scientific process anyway'.³⁵⁹ Flexibility meant that individuals could work to their own strengths, exploiting informal networks and relationships they had established, and through trial and error try to find innovative ways forward. Informal networking was a key mechanism for getting things done which removed many of the difficulties around access and trust which could otherwise arise: 'internally, [a networking approach has been] absolutely essential... maybe more effective than the others, because they are based on a broad trusting what I'm saying'.³⁶⁰ Thus, on the whole, flexibility was seen as a positive response to the situation with benefits over dependence on rigid formal structures.³⁶¹ At the same time, there was an acknowledgement of the potentially negative consequences of the importance attached to flexibility:

I think it allows flexibility in a positive sense, it could be negative, and there probably will be times when it is, in that because its uncharted and because there is, it isn't prescriptive, then there's a chance we may not get consistency, or you have slightly different ways in which people will approach it.³⁶²

Flexibility also enabled staff to make the best use of opportunities as they arose, and exploiting opportunities — especially given the Unit's lack of institutional power, the 'pragmatic' resistance to additional equality work, and the difficulties of finding intervention points within the policy process — was very important:

³⁵⁸ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³⁵⁹ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³⁶⁰ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

³⁶¹ The importance of flexibility can be understood as part of a process of 'decoupling' (Meyer and Rowan, 1991) necessitated by the inconsistency between the formal rules of the organisation (i.e. ideal models of policy processes) and actual work activity. Meyer and Rowan also note that skills in human relations (the ability to work in contradiction to formal rules) are particularly valued in loosely coupled organisations. This issue is discussed more fully in the conclusions.

³⁶² Interview 3 (28-01-02)

In a sense, what we're looking for is an opportunity, are opportunities to intervene, ... [developing mainstreaming is] highly opportunistic.³⁶³

I think we've had to be opportunistic, and I think we've had to, or we should have been on the lookout for opportunities to encourage people, or support people in going the extra half mile.³⁶⁴

There was a discernable shift between the two rounds of interviews in attitudes towards the use of sticks as well as carrots with respect to mainstreaming work. Thus, while in the first round of interviews, the idea of a statutory duty was generally seen to be unhelpful, by the second round there was much more talk of the benefits of the duty on public bodies within the Race Relations Amendment Act to produce race equality schemes. As one interviewee said:

I think we do more of that now, we do refer to the legislation more now partly because experience tells us that people won't do anything unless they have this spelled out to them entirely clearly³⁶⁵

The importance of 'fitting in'

The most significant and widespread response, however, both within the Unit and within the pilot areas, was assimilation: making mainstreaming 'fit' with existing cultures and agendas: 'what we're doing is saying mainstreaming is not something independent of, and apart from these other key drivers for change inside and outside the Executive, but they're part of the same thing'.³⁶⁶ While interviewees did not see this 'linking' or 'fitting' as an active process of framing, it is clear that they were framing issues, in terms of better policy making, in terms of modernising government, and in terms of civil service values, demonstrating a keen awareness of the importance of frame resonance in determining support for mainstreaming:

it seems to go quite well with other agendas doesn't it? ... quite heavily to the modernising government agenda and the whole better delivery of services, better value approach. So it's not something that's happening on its own, its linked to the whole broader ethos of how you look at delivery of public services and role of public sector.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

³⁶⁴ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁶⁵ Interview 12 (21-11-03)

³⁶⁶ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³⁶⁷ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

We tend to phrase, frame it in, this is about better policy making, it's about modernising government, it's about making public services more – delivering to the people, it's in line with all these kinds of policy objectives which were already part of the Executive's commitments³⁶⁸

The advantage of framing mainstreaming in this way was that it could be presented as no different from the work that people were already doing, or from their existing ways of working. Further, mainstreaming could be presented a means of achieving goals which were already accepted as important and necessary. Both these factors were used to play down any difficulties or inconveniences that mainstreaming may cause to policy makers by way of a disruption to their normal ways of working.

I think mainstreaming is not difficult to fit in, so long as you don't try and make it sound more difficult than it is. It isn't difficult, it isn't any big deal, I see it as entirely compatible with modernising government, better policy making, it is entirely compatible with all those things, transparency, accountability, all of it. I think it should be working more explicitly as part of that agenda. *In which case, it isn't difficult because it's part of the mainstream policy agenda.*³⁶⁹

This strategy is an obvious and understandable response to the constraints identified above which those working on mainstreaming operated under; indeed there may have been little other option. It is also a response which itself fits with the pragmatic ethos of civil service working culture. As other studies of mainstreaming have noted, the need for frame resonance may result in the adoption of an integrationist rather than transformatory version of mainstreaming, a logical consequence of framing mainstreaming as the means to achieve existing goals rather than as a route to reorganising policy processes in favour of the goal of greater equality. Interviewees themselves recognised that the effort of 'fitting in' was largely one-way. While they worked hard to demonstrate how mainstreaming equalities fitted with the goals of other agendas, and indeed saw these agendas as providing enabling contexts for their work, no explicit links were made from these wider agendas back to equality. So, for example, in successive *Programmes for Government* there has been little explicit mention of mainstreaming and mainstreaming is notably not flagged up in other cross-cutting areas such as Social Justice, Sustainable Development or Modernising Government (Mackay, 2004a). As one interviewee said:

³⁶⁸ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

³⁶⁹ Interview 1 (17-01-02) my emphasis

[the changing to deliver programme] creates the right kind of climate, I'm not aware of specific links with equalities in it, its a bit like the evidence based policy making, modernising government, all that kind of stuff, creates a climate within which / a policy context that's sympathetic to equalities, and I think that's been one of the biggest things, it makes it much easier to do mainstreaming and push it through, but what the explicit links are I don't know, there might not be any³⁷⁰

The consequences of 'fitting in' need also to be understood at a deeper and more disabling level than the issue of integrationist versus transformatory versions of mainstreaming suggests. The need for frame resonance is not a one-off and statutory requirement, but rather a continual need to respond, flexibly and opportunistically, to a complex and changing environment. Fitting in, then is a process of continual *reframing* and *renegotiation*. The consequences of fitting in are both an inability to spell out a specific character for mainstreaming itself, which can be theorised, understood and shared, and the successful masking of conflict between versions of mainstreaming and traditional bureaucratic frames. In the next chapter this latent conflict is explored in more detail and theorised as a product of the clash between underlying epistemological frames.

³⁷⁰ Interview 18 (12-12-03)

Understanding Implementation: feminism, the civil service and knowledge

In the context of current trends to 'contract out' responsibility for policy implementation, and the increasing number of bodies and organisations involved in governance, mainstreaming is notable as a policy which is designed and implemented within government by government.³⁷¹ It is also a 'meta-policy' – a policy about policy making — which aims to alter the way in which policy is made. Its implementation is therefore potentially revealing not only about the complexities of the mainstreaming strategy itself, but also about the values and understandings which underpin policy making as currently practiced. In particular it illuminates 'the contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities of gender in relation to socio-political organisation' (Woodward, 2001, p. 2), or in this case, specifically in relation to bureaucracy. This chapter proposes that identifying the different epistemological frames – bureaucratic and feminist – which underlie processes of policy making and mainstreaming, aids our understanding of these contradictions and thus our understanding of implementation.

We have seen how implementing the mainstreaming strategy within the Scottish Executive raised various challenges for the responsible actors. In the previous chapter, these challenges were described with the aim of presenting the picture as seen by those involved. I found evidence of a clash between the transformative aims and requirements of (feminist) mainstreaming and the 'normal' working culture of the Scottish Executive. In order to manage the resulting tension (which I understood in terms of conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames), actors had engaged

³⁷¹ Although the Equality Strategy, of which it is a major part, is to be pursued in partnership with various bodies.

in continual processes of reframing through which they 'fitted' mainstreaming into wider organisational contexts and agendas. Having established in that chapter the presence of frame conflict, I turn in this chapter to examine the different ways of knowing on which these frames are predicated. I claim that the implementation of mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive should be understood as a knowledge problem, and that doing so enables us to better understand the difficulties faced by those charged with its implementation. I will argue that mainstreaming contains a radical critique of policy processes, which challenges current framings of knowledge within the civil service, but that this is not explicitly recognised by the civil servants concerned, who see the policy as 'entirely compatible' with modernising government, evidence-based policy and better policy making agendas.

As a knowledge problem, I shall argue that mainstreaming works on two levels, and that it draws upon two different strands in feminist approaches to epistemology, namely feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint. The first, apparently compatible with its interpretation by policy makers, frames mainstreaming as a way of improving policy processes through the application of more robust information and evidence. At this level, mainstreaming does have much in common with evidence-based approaches to policy making, it is a tool intended to help policy makers do what they do, better. As such, it does not appear to fundamentally challenge the way policy is made, but rather to make it adhere more stringently to the principles which should underpin its making. I shall discuss the use of knowledge in relation to mainstreaming as a case of evidence-based policy making further below. At the second level, I shall propose that achieving required changes in ways of working is dependent on a shift in ways of knowing on the part of civil servants. In particular, the integration of an 'equalities perspective' is seen to require a conceptual rather than merely practical shift, and the valuing of 'experiential knowledge' through the commitment to involve those most affected by inequality in the policy process raises difficult questions about the possibility of objective and generalist knowledge. Again, these issues are discussed in more depth below. In order to establish my claim that mainstreaming implementation should be understood as a knowledge problem, I first explain the theoretical basis for the claim and later show how this provides a useful reinterpretation of my interview data.

Why and how is mainstreaming a knowledge problem?

The core of my argument for interpreting mainstreaming as a knowledge problem can be summarised in four points, each alerting us to different ways in which mainstreaming concerns the use and interpretation of knowledge. Mainstreaming:

- Aims to use the espoused rationality of the state to achieve goals which run counter to dominant organisational understandings or ways of knowing
- Argues for the better application of research and data in the policy process to provide a 'truer' picture of the population and the effects of policy on it
- Advocates the involvement and participation of those with 'direct experience' of inequality and discrimination (those most affected by the policies in question) in the policy making process, thus promoting the status of experiential knowledge.
- The cumulative effect of the above is to bring into question the principles and values of objectivity, impartiality and neutrality, which underpin the notion of the 'generalist' civil servant and to question the ideal rational framework within which policy is made.

The process of reorganising policy processes so as to apply a gender or equality analysis (mainstreaming) can be understood as the application of feminist critiques of traditional methodologies and epistemologies to policy making, using the same process which demonstrated that traditional social science, while apparently gender neutral, was in fact centred around male concerns and values. Based on the argument that existing practice of science has been biased in favour of male points of view, for example ignoring women completely, inappropriately generalising from men to women, failing to collect evidence in ways that would reveal differentials and inequalities, or actively distorting gender differences to the detriment of women, feminists have argued for the practice of science to become more gender aware, in order that it is more truly gender neutral. The challenges have been in part methodological, about how research does and should proceed, but also epistemological, concerned with the theory of knowledge implicit within traditional science, and the development of alternative feminist theories of knowledge which would allow for the construction of women as knowers, and of

women's experiences as relevant subjects of knowledge. The question of epistemology has been central to feminist analyses as:

[a]n 'epistemology' is a framework or theory for specifying the constitution and generation of knowledge about the social world: that is, it concerns how to understand the nature of 'reality'. A given epistemological framework specifies not only what 'knowledge' is and how to recognise it, but who are 'knowers' and by what means someone becomes one, and also the means by which competing knowledge-claims are adjudicated and some rejected in favour of another/others. The question of epistemology, then, is crucial, precisely *fundamental*, for feminism, for it is around the constitution of a feminist epistemology that feminism can most directly and far-reachingly challenge non-feminist frameworks and ways of working (Stanley and Wise, 1993, pp. 188 – 189).

Mainstreaming requires change in ways of working by civil servants in three respects: firstly, it requires the integration of new practices, secondly, it requires the use of new and / or different forms of data and thirdly, it involves the use of new and / or different sources of information. By effecting these changes in ways of working, the argument goes, policy-makers will create policy that better reflects the needs of those it affects.³⁷² Knowledge, in the form of gender know-how, research and data is key to affecting change in the way policy is made, i.e. in the 'ways of working' of civil servants. The assumptions of abstract white, middle class, able-bodied, male and heterosexual individuals which (unconsciously) informs much policy³⁷³ are undermined by knowledge (in the form of disaggregated data) of the reality of individuals who are affected by the policies in question. In the above quote, Stanley and Wise alert us to the significance of the relation between knowing and doing. In other words, their argument suggests that producing change in ways of working is not simply a practical or technical matter; it also requires a *conceptual* shift. To work differently is to see, conceive, perceive, and know differently.

Specifically, and relating to the three changes identified above, mainstreaming requires the development of 'gender/equality knowledge' or 'gender/equality know-how', the application of gendered data to develop new ways of knowing-about, and lastly, the creation of 'new knowers' (and thus shifts in definitions of who can know, and of allowable forms of knowledge). It is thus evident that the changes required by mainstreaming work at both a technical /

³⁷² Scottish Executive, 2000a, pp. 14, 30.

³⁷³ These assumptions work in two different ways: firstly, much targeted social policy has historically been made to contain the 'other'; and secondly, the differential impact of much universal policy has not been recognised.

practical and a conceptual level. At the conceptual level, actors are required to think about policy problems from a new perspective, to find a new way of seeing something. From this new perspective what we knew before – that policy was neutral between different groups – is challenged by what we know now – that it is not. This shift in knowledge, resulting from our new perspective, may be achieved through the novel use of accepted forms of ‘evidence’ – for example the disaggregation of statistical data – which demonstrate something is not what we thought.³⁷⁴

The task of challenging and changing ‘frameworks’ and ‘ways of working’, so far largely untouched by feminist understandings, is exactly the challenge that mainstreaming sets itself. The aim is to integrate a new perspective, – a gender or equality perspective depending on the case in hand – a way of seeing from the position of gender or equality. The logic of mainstreaming requires the reorganisation of policy processes because, as we saw in chapter one, policies and programmes have been uncritically assumed (as had ‘traditional’ science), both in their development and in their effects, to treat women and men in the same way: in fact, both the design and the consequences of policy are often highly differentiated along (amongst others) intersecting lines of gender, race, class and disability. Mainstreaming thus focuses on integrating an equalities or gender perspective into all stages of policy and programmes in order firstly, to expose their equality/gender-partiality (as opposed to neutrality), and secondly, to ensure that this is not to the detriment of, and preferably to the promotion of, equality. Mainstreaming therefore challenges *ways of working* by requiring the integration of a gender or equality perspective into policy making. It challenges existing *frameworks* (understood as supporting or underlying structures) by requiring change to institutional cultures and structures that inform current ways of working. In the *Equality Strategy*, it is intended that mainstreaming ‘will bring real, long-term change to the culture and approach of the Executive’³⁷⁵ and it ‘aims to change organisational cultures so that an Equalities perspective becomes an integral part’.^{376 377}

³⁷⁴ In Canada the mainstreaming approach has been described as ‘asking new questions and hearing unexpected answers’ (Mackay and Bilton, 2000, p. 109). Changing the way statistics are used is one way of raising new questions.

³⁷⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 1.

³⁷⁶ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 14.

Mainstreaming as feminist epistemology – deconstructing the abstract white, male, civil servant

[T]he civil service prides itself on being an organisation that is staffed by disinterested generalists. The senior civil servants, in particular, are seen to represent the absolute pinnacle of rationality. Being vessels of pure reason they encapsulate the properties of the enlightenment. They are seen to be emblematic of an organisation that is built along the lines of scientific rationality. Like 'scientists', these figures are represented as the producers of unbiased, value-free information and advice. Working in adherence to scientific procedure, these bodies, like their close cousins who work in laboratories, are exalted as the guardians of impartiality, in a world riddled by particularisms. It is purported that these rational people have managed to take flight from the realm of affectivity, emotion and bodies into the realm of objectivity, rationality and universality. (Puwar, 2001, p. 657)

Puwar is obviously talking about ideals here, and the way in which such ideals are manifested (symbolically and physically) in the bodies of senior civil servants. The more the individual mimics or assimilates these ideals, the greater their chances of achieving promotion to the highest levels of the Service, supporting Watson's finding that seniority within the Service required considerable identification with the dominant culture of the organisation (1992b, p. 63). The actual practice of being a civil servant will diverge from this ideal, and, we can suggest from Puwar's analysis that the more junior the civil servant, the greater the degree of divergence that may be possible. As Watson has demonstrated (1992b) the Civil Service is not a homogeneous entity, but rather cultures vary between departments. Yet the ideal of the disinterested, rational, objective and impartial generalist still works to structure the context in which all civil servants operate. Watson (1992b) found the discourse of the 'sensible chap' (typically the white Oxbridge male) still structured how many senior civil servants thought about the qualities desired of their colleagues, moreover, the 'sensible chap' was ascribed the status of the gender neutral 'individual' (p. 64). The concept of the generalist civil servant is predicated on the belief that, with the appropriate set of skills, an adequately trained individual should be able to work in any given area regardless of their social position, and particularly regardless of whether they have any knowledge of the specificities of

³⁷⁷ The emphasis on cultural and institutional *change* within the Executive echoes the call for institutional and cultural *innovation* in the design of the parliament though reflecting an acknowledgement that the Executive is both a new and an old institution.

that area.³⁷⁸ This ability comes from the application of rational thought in an impartial (and as was stressed in interviews) pragmatic manner. I have stated previously that the attachment to the ideal of neutrality in the British civil service has been given as an explanatory factor for the absence of a femocrat strategy to parallel that in Australia (Chappell, 2002).

In her critique, Puwar draws direct parallels between the Civil Service and 'scientific' practices, norms and bodies. The scientific model has in turn have been subject to sustained critique by feminist academics and researchers (see for example, Harding, 1987). Not only has traditional 'science' been revealed to produce research and findings biased towards male interests as discussed earlier, but the very norms on which it is based – those of objectivity, rationality and impartiality have themselves been shown to be gendered. These qualities, associated with the public realm of activity, form one part of a dualism whose (inferior) corollary is the private, feminine realm of subjectivity, emotion and attachment. As a political and normative project feminism rejects the separation of emotion and reason. Thus, further than demonstrating how discourses of reason have worked to deny women access to public life, feminists have aimed to break down the dualisms between reason and emotion and between objectivity and subjectivity. Thus, if a bureaucracy, such as the civil service, continues to uphold such dualisms, as an organisation it can only create a partial and gendered knowledge of the world in which it is situated. As will be discussed further below, feminist analysis of gender and institutions has demonstrated the extent to which gendered processes occur within processes of organising, and therefore how bureaucracies, as currently practised, are themselves inherently gendered.³⁷⁹

Having revealed the ways in which much existing research practice has been conducted from a male point of view, and therefore presents at best only a partial picture of the world, feminists are faced with two challenges: developing methodologies and methods which will produce research better able to capture the 'realities' of women's as well as men's lives, and providing a justification for their findings – some account of the relationship between feminist knowledge and social

³⁷⁸ The 'specialist' areas of economics, statistics, etc. are seen separately from the administrative generalist in this respect. As will be discussed below, equality is sometimes framed as half—way to a specialism.

³⁷⁹ Savage and Witz (1992) argue that it is 'highly appropriate ... to consider the relation between gender and the modern bureaucratic state along with that of the relation between gender and bureaucratic workplace organizations'.

'reality'. The project of developing a feminist approach to epistemology has stemmed from and informed feminist approaches to methodology. As feminism has tended to align itself with interpretive and social constructionist approaches any simple reading from knowledge to reality, through 'fact' is problematic.

Two forms of feminist epistemology are commonly identified: feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint. Feminist empiricism has argued for stricter adherence to the norms of science in order to remove androcentric bias. The women's movement plays a key role in enabling this process by revealing an enlarged perspective on the world, removing 'covers and blinders that obscure knowledge and observation' (Millman and Moss Kanter, 1987, p. 30). Clear parallels with mainstreaming can be made, where the application of 'gender knowledge' — either via training and or through the input of 'gender experts' — together with the use of mainstreaming 'tools' such as impact assessments, aims to enlarge the perspective of policy makers so that they are better able to see the gendered (and racialised, disabled) specificities of policy design and implementation, and thus produce policy more truly in line with the norms of policy making. Policy makers thus arrive (perhaps just temporarily) at an enlarged perspective of the world, or as Woodward describes it, experience an 'aha' effect (2001, p. 28). In order to gain our new perspective, mainstreaming (especially as it has been developed in Scotland) also asks us to recognise different and new forms of knowledge: in particular, by acknowledging that those with experiential knowledge have an important role to play in informing policy. By recognising experiential knowledge, mainstreaming also creates a new class of 'knowers'. Like feminist empiricist criticisms of the practice of science, the logic of this argument implies that it is possible to achieve 'good policy' within existing policy making frameworks, through the application of better information which will remove unintentional bias. Mainstreaming will further rationalise the policy process, and enable policy makers to be more fully objective and impartial.

Standpoint epistemology, drawing on Marxist analyses, positions experience as the basis of knowledge and claims that women / feminists, as members of a subjugated sex-class, may achieve a fuller and less distorted image of social reality than men / non-feminists. Based on a feminist standpoint epistemology, it would be problematic to argue that an 'equalities perspective' could be achieved by 'ordinary

actors', a key tenet of the mainstreaming approach,³⁸⁰ yet there are elements of standpoint detectable within mainstreaming. Firstly, the status which mainstreaming (particularly as interpreted in the Scottish context) awards to experiential knowledge, through the commitment to involving those with direct experience of inequality in the policy process, goes some way towards an implicit recognition of standpoint. Secondly, as developed through the *report of the Group of Specialists to the Equality Strategy*, those promoting mainstreaming have made a connection between the integration of gender into policy processes and the sex composition of the workforce, arguing that gender balance is seen as 'both a central plank of the promotion of mainstreaming, and also an important goal'.³⁸¹

The promotion of gender balance as part of a mainstreaming strategy does not necessarily imply any commitment to standpoint — for example, where principles of justice are employed to argue the need for 'an equal sharing of power in economy, society and policy-making processes'³⁸² — but gender balance is also seen as necessary for the representation of women's 'interests' and the development of political will for gender policy.³⁸³ The Scottish Executive has made 'being a good employer' one of its three strategic priorities as laid out in the *Equality Strategy*.³⁸⁴ This entails 'promoting equal opportunities for all its people and ... achieving a significant increase in the diversity of its staff'.³⁸⁵ Again, sex composition is being related to the ability to create equality-aware policy, '[t]he Executive needs to be able to draw on people whose diversity reflects that of the population of Scotland at large so that it can be more effective in developing policy'.³⁸⁶ While not an explicit statement of belief in standpoint as a basis for knowledge, it is clear that the Executive / *Equality Strategy* considers the social location of individuals to have a bearing on their ability to inform policy from an 'equalities perspective'.

³⁸⁰ Though note, Harding argues that a standpoint differs from a perspective in that 'a feminist standpoint is not something anyone can have by claiming it, but an achievement' (1987, p. 185).

³⁸¹ USGS, 1998, p. 16

³⁸² CoE, 1998, p. 7

³⁸³ In the CoE report, Gender balance in decision making is seen as necessary to give gender equality a prominent place on the political agenda, and reference is made to the 'critical mass theory' by which it is suggested that policy change will be detected when women constitute at least a third of decision making bodies. (CoE, 1998, p. 25). Women's representation has also been linked to democratic renewal, for example through the Charter of Rome.

³⁸⁴ Scottish Executive 2000a, p. 16

³⁸⁵ Scottish Executive, 2000a, p. 23

³⁸⁶ Scottish Executive 2000a, p. 23

Even if one rejects the implicit invocation of standpoint argued for above, the critique of knowledge implied in mainstreaming strategies is still challenging for bureaucratic knowledge frames. Harding (1987, pp. 183 – 4) points out that feminist empiricism, while purportedly aiming to strengthen the practice of empiricist science, actually undermines the assumptions upon which it is based in three respects. Firstly, it suggests that the social identity of the observer is significant to the results of research (and therefore that the context of discovery is as important as the context of justification), secondly, unless it directs researchers to 'locate themselves in the same critical plane as their subject matters', it will not eradicate the androcentrism that shapes the research process, and thirdly, if science is to present a picture which includes women's worlds and social relations between the sexes this will often require alternative approaches to inquiry to those based on the application of existing research norms. By opening up possibilities for doing policy differently, mainstreaming questions the basis on which it has been done. While perhaps *unintentional* (and unconscious), it is not *coincidental* that bureaucracy has created policy which (re) produces inequality. As theorists of gender and institutions have established, this outcome results from the ways in which processes of gendering take place within process of organising (Acker, 1990; Witz, 1999). To say that bureaucracy is gendered does not have to suggest that bureaucracies will necessarily and always make biased policy, but does suggest that norms developed within gendered institutions are themselves likely to be gendered.

Mainstreaming and gendered institutions

As said above, mainstreaming requires changes not only to ways of working, but also to frameworks, and these are gendered. Thus change must be understood and analysed not just in relation to demands on individuals or at the level of policies, but also at the organisational level. As we saw in chapter four, mainstreaming has been framed as the solution to the unconscious and unwitting (re)production of inequality and discrimination. This begs the key question, why does this happen? Why, without conscious effort, are these structures reproduced? For an answer we must look beyond the level of policy processes to the organisational level, and turn to feminist critiques of gender and bureaucracy.

Woodward (1999, 2001) stands out amongst academics writing on mainstreaming for the attention she pays to the connection between mainstreaming and feminist critiques of bureaucracy. Her work explores the tensions that arise from using the

'language of the state' to 'rationalize public bureaucracy' with the aim of achieving the 'irrational' goal of gender equality, and asks 'to what extent is it possible to merely insert gender concerns in an organisational setting designed with man in mind?' (2001, p. 4). Our answer to this question will depend on how we conceptualise the relationship between gender and organisation.³⁸⁷ Woodward implicitly rejects an essentialist understanding of the relationship between the two (as proposed in Ferguson's (1984) critique of bureaucracy) by suggesting that the amount of positive change achieved within an organisation implementing a mainstreaming strategy is affected by 'how mainstreaming is introduced, by whom, the historical context, and the presence of opposition' (2001, p. 5). Indeed, mainstreaming as a strategy only makes sense within an analysis of organisations or bureaucracy which, while accepting that they are currently gendered in oppressive ways, sees this not as immutable fact. By changing organisational cultures and frameworks, mainstreaming aims to make bureaucracy less 'oppressively gendered' (Britton, 2000) and racialised.

In the *Equality Strategy* it is stated that this aim will be pursued in conjunction with targets for increasing diversity within the civil service. The connection between the sex composition of a given workforce and the gender of the institution should not be assumed (Britton, 2000, p. 424), but analysis of the civil service has demonstrated it to be both nominally and symbolically male (Watson, 1992b; Puwar, 2001). I find Witz's (1999) 'embedded and embodied' approach to the understanding of gender and organisation most useful. Drawing on the work of Acker (1990), Witz (1999) argues firstly, that processes of gendering should be understood as taking place *within* processes of organising, rather than as existing independently and subsequently mapped onto organisations, and secondly, that modern organisations both presume and normalise the male body while rendering particular versions of male embodiment invisible within rationalist and disembodied discourses of organisations (Witz, 1999, p. 58).

This means that even with commitment to transform the culture of the bureaucracy, strategies to increase the diversity of the workforce and individuals within the organisation committed to achieving change, existing gendered practices and discourses may (or are likely to) be reproduced. Until ideal norms shift, bodies which differ from those made invisible by dominant discourses will continue to be a

³⁸⁷ For an overview of approaches to understanding this relationship see Witz and Savage (1992).

disruptive presence as Puwar has described, and loyalty and identification with the direction and discourses of the bureaucracy will be difficult to resist (Watson, 1992).

This is despite the fact that actual experiences of work often contradict the ideal of how the organisation operates, as was demonstrated by interviewees who explicitly acknowledged the messiness and unscientific nature of policy making at the same time as they continued to use, and find useful, ideal rational models of the process. Thus not only bodies but the daily experience of operating and being highlight the disjuncture between ideal norms and actual practice. Martin (2001, p. 606) has argued that men remain the implicit 'ideal' worker in bureaucratic contexts even though their actual work practices are often not aimed at promoting formal organisational goals. She further suggests that men are somewhat protected from this disjuncture as they operate in a state of 'liminal', or less than full, awareness of the gendered aspects of their practices.

As above, mainstreaming aims to undermine these gendered assumptions, or liminal practices, in order to produce more gender and diversity aware policy. It does so, in part, through using rational bureaucratic tools, yet this brings with it new tensions. One such source of tension has arisen from the framing of mainstreaming on the one hand as a transformatory feminist strategy, and on the other as evidence-based policy making.

Mainstreaming as modernisation / evidence-based policy-making

Mainstreaming equality represents one of several agendas which have aimed to change the way in which the civil service works and how it makes policy. Under the modernising government umbrella, evidence-based policy making aims to increase the utilisation of research in policy processes, with the aim of creating policies and services which better meet the needs of those they affect. It forms part of the Scottish Executive's wider commitment to 'making government work for the people of Scotland' by promoting 'modern government' (Scottish Executive, 1999, p. 17) and at UK level is central to the government's approach as laid out in its *Modernising Government* white paper to 'make sure that government services are better – that they reflect real lives and deliver what people really want. Better provision of better services available from government at all levels is central to the approach of Modernising Government' (Cabinet Office, 1999, p. 5). As said above, mainstreaming has often been promoted and understood within the framework of

evidence-based policy making. In contrast to its feminist framings, here the use of information or evidence in the policy process is underpinned by a 'rational' approach' both to policy making and to the existence and possibilities of knowledge and its application (Sanderson, 2000; Stone, 2002). The 'management' of knowledge is increasingly seen as key to effective organisation and the achievement of desired results, and therefore as a significant tool for 'effective' implementation. Its use in this way has occurred alongside an increasing focus within government discourse on evaluation, delivery and targets. Within this discourse, knowledge (normally read as evidence) is used to ensure that targets are achieved and thus that outcomes reflect policy goals, and thus reflects a reassertion of 'normative, top-down, coercive process models of policy implementation or performance, and of 'performance' as conformance with policy targets' (Barrett, 2004).

The rationalist underpinnings of evidence-based policy making have been criticised by those who emphasise the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Nutley et al, 2003; Stone, 2002; Schwandt, 1997). Where the rational approach suggests it is possible to approach social affairs in an 'apolitical, scientized manner' (Schwandt, 1997), the constructivist approach points to the contingent and contested status of knowledge, to the complexity and plurality of knowledge and of ways of knowing and therefore to the political as well as technical issues that arise from the application of knowledge to policy making.

The concurrent framings of mainstreaming both as a rational and apolitical approach to improving policy making efficacy and as a political and normative attempt to transform the gendered nature of bureaucracy result in significant tensions for those attempting to implement it. Mainstreaming appears 'common sense', and something that 'fits' easily with existing agendas and goals, but then how are the difficulties experienced in implementing it to be explained? It is to this question I now turn in the second part of this chapter.

Knowledge problems in practice: implementing mainstreaming

In various obvious ways, mainstreaming poses knowledge questions. It requires evidence and data about different groups in society so that policy makers are able to make assessments about how their policies will affect these groups. It requires knowledge about systems of inequality and discrimination and how they operate,

about what works in tackling these (and thus evaluations of mainstreaming projects) and of policy processes themselves. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there is a knowledge gap concerning how to put mainstreaming into practice, or 'make it real'. Several interviewees felt that most parts of the Executive would be familiar with the *principles* of mainstreaming, but there was clearly a difference between familiarity and comprehension. Within the Scottish Executive, lack of feedback and learning resulted in little knowledge of what worked (and what did not) and thus knowledge creation was a significant problem. The absence of any fully implemented examples of mainstreaming, the lack of case study evaluations and the perceived uniqueness of the Executive's approach and position were seen to reduce possibilities for policy learning / transfer below the level of broad principles and tools. A knowledge gap was perceived between Equality Unit and 'mainstream' policy staff, with the former sometimes knowing little of the substantive policy area and the latter knowing little of mainstreaming.³⁸⁸ These knowledge questions form a group of 'surface level' issues, which were understood as a need for various types of explicit knowledge – knowledge that can be stated.

In more subtle ways, mainstreaming also posed knowledge questions of a 'tacit' kind – knowledge which is required to do something but which the actor cannot readily articulate – sometimes expressed as 'common sense'. Mainstreaming both challenged existing tacit knowledge within the Executive regarding correct ways of making policy and appropriate forms of knowledge, and was also hampered by a lack of tacit knowledge regarding inequalities and mainstreaming. These 'deeper' knowledge questions are apparent in the distinctions, divisions and tensions drawn by interviewees with respect to mainstreaming, for example in the way ideas of appropriate knowledge were used to differentiate between Equality Unit and 'mainstream' civil servants – the former need to know why, while the latter only need to know how. They were also apparent in the unease mainstreaming caused by bringing contestable, contingent and intangible issues into the realm of policy which left policy makers unsure whether they had got it right, or how they would know if they had. In this respect, mainstreaming is similar to other 'wicked issues' (Clarke and Stewart, 1997) facing government such as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. But the way in which mainstreaming was seen to challenge personal values and beliefs, and unsettle existing assumptions — discussed below —

³⁸⁸ Though as commented in the previous chapter, Equality unit staff wary of claiming any superior knowledge of mainstreaming or equality than mainstream colleagues.

requires us to look beyond the 'technical issues' of cross-cutting working. By placing those with direct experience of inequality and discrimination in the role of knowers, mainstreaming brought into question the status of civil service knowledge, and raised questions about the place and possibility of objectivity and impartiality in the construction of knowledge as argued above. Underpinning these deeper knowledge questions is an implicit acknowledgement of the existence of multiple, competing knowledges, and of relationships between knowledge and power. Taking on board the need to 'go beyond the usual suspects' and to recognise the expertise of experience, policy makers were left without a framework for judging between claims or establishing connections between knowledge and 'reality'. Mainstreaming doesn't replace politics (Bjork, 2002), but through framing knowledge as a technical issue, it may appear to do so.

The 'surface level' knowledge issues

The technical framing of knowledge underlies the surface level interpretation of knowledge questions. Knowledge was understood, interpreted and employed as if it were an unproblematic concept, the increase of which would lead to better policy, demonstrating the 'modernist belief in progress through informed reason' which Sanderson notes as underlying common conceptions of evidence based practice (2002, p. 1).

The persistence of 'know-how' as a significant barrier to mainstreaming has been identified both in the literature on mainstreaming (CoE, 1998; Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Woodward, 2003) and emerged as a key issue in the previous chapter. In Nutley et al's definition, 'know-how' assumes knowledge of what should be done, but not how to put it into practice: 'knowing what should be done is not the same as being able to do it effectively' (2003, p. 128). Interviewees knew that they needed to integrate an equalities perspective into their work, but they often lacked knowledge of how to put this principle into practice 'it is easy to give a definition, what is really hard is to say how to do it',³⁸⁹ people had 'a general idea about what it means if not of the individual, the current precise strategies and processes attached to it'.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁹⁰ Interview 3 (28-01-02)

Within the literature, the lack of concrete case studies of mainstreaming practice (Mackay and Bilton, 2000), the vagueness or ambiguity of the policy (Mazey, 2000a, 2000b) and the lack of any fully-implemented policy (Mackay and Bilton, 2000; Verloo, 2001) were noted as contributing to a difficulty in moving from theory to practice, and these themes also arose in interviews. Interviewees argued that a lack of practical understanding stymied implementation within the Executive and could not be gleaned from 'paper based stuff',³⁹¹ there was consequently a lot of time and effort spent trying to 'work out what it means' and 'how you actually do it'.

In these discussions, 'know-how' was thought of as a practical issue; the solutions requested were in the form of short guides, practical examples, and bullet points:

What we really need, and what we haven't really got, arguably, is an easy guide to mainstreaming, in a practical context. The two pages that says, 'you've got a policy, someone asks you what you're doing to mainstream, you say, oh no, what's mainstreaming, what do I need to do that, I've got two months to put this together, what can I do now'. Okay that's a superficial, that's a tokenistic, whatever, but what are the key steps that you need to do to develop that, so something short, snappy, that would be ideal.³⁹²

The knowledge required was technical, straightforward, un-theoretical and concerned very much with *know-how* rather than *know-why*.³⁹³ Immediate pressures dictated the level of learning or understanding seen as possible and therefore the kind of knowledge needs identified. As discussed in the previous chapter, interviewees felt an overwhelming need to work out 'what needed to be done' in a way that could be translated into practical and concrete activities. This often meant that examples from elsewhere would appear too abstract to be useful. That which was not practical and concrete was equated with the theoretical, and theory was seen as a luxury which could not be afforded by those faced with the day-to-day reality of implementation. As one interviewee put it 'because of the kind of job I'm doing at the moment, without knowing exactly what people are doing it's all a bit sort of theoretical, I don't mean that in a disparaging way, so I don't know. I mean I read stuff about how they do things but ...'.³⁹⁴ Thus not only was the form of

³⁹¹ Interview 19 (18-12-03)

³⁹² Interview 4 (05-02-02)

³⁹³ Nutley et al. (2003, p. 128) define *know-why* as: knowledge about why action is required, e.g. relationship to values.

³⁹⁴ Interview 1 (17-01-02)

knowledge desired technical, but this was seen as the only form of knowledge possible to integrate with the working culture or 'realities' of policy making.

Information in the form of research and statistics is noted as a key requirement of mainstreaming strategies (CoE, 1998; Mackay and Bilton, 2000). It constituted one of four 'main strands' of the Executive's consultation proposals and was a key component of the *Equality Strategy*. In interviews, research and statistics was often identified as an area of progress (perhaps partly because they produced identifiable outputs), though the extent to which policy makers gainfully employed research and statistics is hard to gauge. In some instances, and particularly around an agenda for work on 'women's issues', policy makers were reluctant to use existing research to form agendas themselves, preferring instead to receive demands from external sources through lobbying. This reluctance is evidence for the difficulties of internal advocacy within UK civil service culture noted by Chappell (2002). Despite admitting to awareness of what the key issues would be likely to be (through involvement in women's networks as described in chapter four), interviewees did not feel able to dictate an agenda from within the bureaucracy. In part this was a practical issue — lobbying provided policy makers with legitimacy and authority for action, extremely useful when persuading others of the need for extra work — but there was also a strong sense that it would be improper for the agenda to be set from within.

there's an onus on them [the groups] to be enunciating what the agenda is, what the barriers are, and it would be inappropriate, ... with rights come responsibilities, or with a policy commitment comes a need for the groups to help in identifying the agenda, ... we could get it wrong, what we see as issues from our side of town, in fact could be completely the wrong ones, ... I can't experience what a disabled person experiences, I can ensure that they have an opportunity to feed in their experience, and I've got an obligation to equalise the access to the policy-making process, but I can not speak for disabled people, I have to ensure that they can speak for themselves.³⁹⁵

This issue highlighted the difficulty, for individuals who had been active in civic society and were now in bureaucratic positions of power, in managing the misfit between external expectations that they would carry work forward and their perception, as bureaucrats, of their new roles. In the case of a women's agenda this situation led to a seeming impasse, with women's organisations arguing they had made their agenda clear in many years of activism, and civil servants feeling they

³⁹⁵ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

needed a mandate to act (Mackay, 2004b). As a solution, and amidst growing concerns that the gender agenda was slipping down the equality agenda, a 'Strategic Group on Women' was set up to advise the Executive. This group, consisting of women with academic and activist expertise in women's issues, consulted on and prepared a report identifying key areas of concern for women and laying out what action they wished the Executive to take. While the process may have helped to catalyse action around these issues, the group did not come up with 'new' demands; the key issue areas of employment, caring, poverty and exclusion, violence against women, childcare and influence and decision-making were available to policy makers from previous research. The more significant function of the report was, as suggested, to provide a mandate for action by the Executive. This example demonstrates the difficulty of using available research and statistics if to do so is seen to create or shape political agendas.

The continual feeling of 'not knowing what we needed to do' and 'what could we do that we haven't already done' also suggests an underutilisation of research, a contention which was supported in some interviews; 'I'll speak quite frankly and say that I'm quite disappointed that we haven't made more of ... learning lessons from experience ... I think we could have done a lot more with the material that Fiona had done for the CSG, I think that there are very, very few people who've ever looked at that, even after they've joined the unit, at a later stage.'³⁹⁶ There was little transfer of knowledge or research from other governments/ countries, in part because their experiences were not seen as comparable.³⁹⁷ There had also been little use of the equalities research team, but this was put down to fact that research team was in its infancy, and not yet fully up and running. On the other hand, significant progress was made regarding the production and dissemination of disaggregated data, informed both by the previous work of Engender in producing 'Gender Audits' of women's position in Scotland and through consultation with the likely users of such statistics.

Lastly, expertise in equality / gender is identified as a necessary requirement in the mainstreaming literature. In the previous chapter a lack of expertise both with respect to equality issues and with respect to mainstreaming was identified. The extent to which expertise was seen as a problem by interviewees varied, with some

³⁹⁶ Interview 5 (05-02-02)

³⁹⁷ This was in contrast to the enthusiasm of politicians and civil society for lessons from elsewhere through, for example, the work of the SCC and CSG.

feeling very strongly that expertise in equality issues was essential to doing mainstreaming work, while others did not see mainstreaming as requiring any specialist knowledge, but rather the application of a set of professional competencies as with any other area.³⁹⁸ Lack of expertise in main policy areas was also identified as an issue for Equality Unit staff and the 'mis-match' of expertise between Unit staff and those in main policy areas was seen to create a problem for mainstreaming.

I think it is a problem for the Equality Unit, that we have no expertise in housing, health, whatever it is, and we're trying to push an agenda, and people on the other side have no knowledge maybe of the Equalities perspective, and a lot of what we're trying to do is build the two pieces of expertise together.³⁹⁹

The need to mesh together two different areas of expertise has been a focus of much discussion about how to improve the use of research in the policy process more generally. Explanations of why research has not been sufficiently utilised have often identified a 'cultural gap' between researchers and policy-makers (Stone, 2002, p. 288) even to the extent that they are seen to live in separate worlds (Neilson, 2001, cited in Stone, 2002, p. 288). As we shall see below, the possession or lack of expertise in equality is also seen as an indicator of larger cultural differences between civil servants.

Common to these three 'surface level' issues is the understanding of knowledge as a technical problem, and similar to Stone's 'push and pull' factors (2002, p. 291), they have been shaped by a technocratic-problem solving approach which defines the problem (and here Stone is implicitly drawing on Bacchi, 1999) as a non-political issue. This technocratic-problem solving approach is compatible with the common understanding of evidence-based policy making and the underlying belief in the possibility of progress informed by reason (Sanderson, 2002, p. 1); the application of knowledge, understood unproblematically as providing neutral information, leads to 'better' policy making. As we saw in chapters two and five, the framing of mainstreaming as a means to better policy making through the application of knowledge in this sense has been widespread. Mainstreaming advocates, in Scotland and elsewhere, have emphasised the ways in which mainstreaming would further the existing aims and goals of the bureaucracy, removing (often

³⁹⁸ I will talk more about this issue later.

³⁹⁹ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

unintentional) bias and assumptions which fail to challenge, or worse perpetuate, existing inequalities, and in the process making policy more efficient as it is more closely based upon the actual needs of the populations concerned.

In so doing, advocates have employed the 'rational' arguments of better-policy making, enabling mainstreaming to use the formal rationality of the state to pursue the 'irrational' goal of subverting and transforming the state for the purpose of equality (Woodward, 1999, p. 133). The nature and aim of the transformation desired is at heart a political one, and one which feminists recognise will require more than the technical application of information – though this may be key to bringing it about. Such transformation is problematic for a bureaucracy which values neutrality as a central and underpinning principle. At this point, mainstreaming can only be understood within bureaucratic framings as an apolitical strategy; to acknowledge it as otherwise would be to present those implementing it as motivated by values not acceptable within that frame. As we shall see below, mainstreaming is in fact working to create such a distinction, though at present this tension is being 'managed' through processes of reframing. Harding saw feminist epistemology in any form as inherently challenging to traditional scientific knowledge which 'is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth. It is supposed to be protected from political interests, goals and desires (such as feminist ones) by the norms of science' (1987, p. 182). For my interviewees, these same values underpinned bureaucratic ways of working and ways of knowing. For those with backgrounds in equality work, the recognition of male bias at institutional and policy levels could be used to argue that applying an equalities perspective was simply correcting a bias. For the more 'main-stream' policy makers, there was a greater tension as an equalities perspective was understood, at some level, as partial and political and thus, at least in some circumstances, as inappropriate. This tension was evident most clearly in discussions of whether interviewees believed mainstreaming was or should be transformatory.

Mainstreaming is based upon 'a faith that policy making can and will make a difference', common to evidence-based policy-making generally (Sanderson, 1999, p. 135), and uses a technocratic approach to knowledge to achieve change. At the same time, its critique of policy making is informed by feminist analyses of bureaucratic rationality which alert us to its gendered bases and assumptions, and which are ultimately the result of political projects. As argued above, the Executive understands mainstreaming to require changes to the way it works, but by

introducing these changes the Executive is also challenged on the basis on which it knows. These 'deeper' challenges to knowledge are the subject of the following section. The distinction between surface and deep level issues I wish to make relates not only to technical / political differences but also to the extent mainstreaming fitted comfortably with, or raised challenges for, those implementing it.

The 'deep level' issues

As seen above, the 'surface level' knowledge questions raised by mainstreaming present themselves as technical issues to be solved by a fuller application of existing principles. The 'deeper level' questions discussed are not a set of wholly different issues, but rather often underlie the apparently technical 'surface level': while I have presented them as two separate types, 'surface level' knowledge questions are, in practice, often inseparable from 'deep level' issues. Once we accept that 'knowledge' does not have a straightforward and unproblematic relationship to 'reality' but rather that different knowledges make competing claims for versions of reality, then the technical exercise of gathering information about different social groups involves us in deeper questions about how such 'information' is produced and interpreted. Integrating an 'equalities perspective' into policy making then becomes more than making sure we have asked what the impact of a given policy will be on say, black women (though this is an important part), it also challenges our ability to 'know' this given that our knowledge is based upon our partial experience of the world. If we accept that existing policies and practices (unwittingly) reproduce inequalities at least in part because they are created in gendered institutions, then values of impartiality and neutrality become even more problematic. This interrelationship has been hinted at above, where for instance we saw that the application of research and statistics was problematic where this was seen to stray into the development of political agendas or where the possession of different expertise was formulated as both a technical problem, and as a signifier of cultural difference. I will elaborate further on these examples here.

Through the interviews, a picture of two distinct 'types' of civil servant emerged, based upon the types of knowledge deemed relevant to each. Those working in mainstream policy areas were characterised as neutral, disinterested administrators who wanted 'to be told what to do'; there was an explicit rejection of *know-why* in any other than the most instrumental terms. In contrast, those in the Equality Unit

were seen as 'relative specialists' who needed to understand why. Puwar (2001, p. 658) argues that there is a hierarchical distinction within the civil service between the 'general administrators who are designated to be the all-round universal leaders, and the specialists.' Thus by using knowledge to differentiate culturally between Equality Unit and other policy actors, interviewees may also have implicitly been marking Unit staff as inferior. The driver for mainstream civil servants was political will – they would do something because someone who was important (i.e. their minister) said it was important. Equality Unit staff in contrast, could be concerned with the 'theology'⁴⁰⁰ behind action, with why something was important.

In chapter three, we saw similar distinctions drawn between the Scottish Office officials and women's groups by members of each. Thus talking to Scottish Office officials at the first meeting was initially like 'talking to aliens' according to an Engender report, and Scottish Office officials expressed difficulty in understanding what the women's groups wanted from them, and found they did not appear to be placing concrete demands.⁴⁰¹ The two groups held contrasting perceptions of what took place. While women's groups saw their demands for further consultation as a response to the lack of expertise within the Scottish Office, Scottish Office officials interpreted the demand as an indication that women's groups were not interested in action, but just wanted to talk. Women's groups felt their priorities had been clearly set out in the unofficial Scottish Women's report which was sent to Beijing; they did not recognise that in order to gain legitimacy for action officials needed claims to be constantly reiterated and reframed within current dominant discourses.

Interviewees recognised that in some respects, mainstreaming was different from other change agendas, and that it required specialist gender and equality knowledge rather than simply the application of new tools or information. Research and statistics do not of themselves hold meaning, but this is given to through processes of selection, collection and interpretation. Their application is thus both a technical and a political issue. The use of 'evidence' is not simply a technical exercise but requires the application of complex knowledge, as was recognised by some Unit staff:

⁴⁰⁰ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

⁴⁰¹ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

getting people to use checklists other than simply as checklists ... or getting people to use evidence, you'll get them sometimes to use evidence of various kinds, but quite often they don't know how to do an equality analysis of it, so it just falls flat, getting people to understand the dynamics of equality and discrimination, is difficult.⁴⁰²

A further difference concerned the type of problem which mainstreaming required policy makers to address. Mainstreaming equality represented a grey area, where right and wrong were hard to define, and this led to a sense of uneasiness which was not felt in relation to other areas, '[finance] seems a bit more administratively easier I suppose, whereas this feels, I think quite intangible to people, also because equality is contestable, it's not just about it not being rocket science, it's also about whether people agree it's needed at all.'⁴⁰³ The idea of being 'administratively' easier is interesting, and seems to relate to the difficulty civil servants had in working out what needed to be done. Using Fraser's (1989) terminology, 'equality demands' did not fit into easily administrable satisfactions: 'you don't get a clear set of goals laid down, but you get a lot of talk around what's wrong, and I think people can find that a little bit frustrating because, if you're asked for specific things, there's a yes no answer. Like more yards of cycle track, or more nursery places, or something like that.'⁴⁰⁴ Mainstreaming equality seems to be luring civil servants in to Fraser's focus on the 'politics of need interpretation' and the 'far more controversial' nature of needs as understood within a 'thick' analysis (1989, pp. 292 – 3). Thus rather than staying in the relatively safe realm of decisions as to whether predefined needs (x number of nursery places) will be met, mainstreaming raises the complexities of interpreting needs including who establishes need (re women's agenda, policy makers or activists) and whether the discursive means exist equally for different groups to articulate needs (how do we know that we've asked everybody?).

Recognising that equality is contestable makes decisions about 'what-works' (a mantra of (UK) discourse on policy making) problematic; identifying what works presumes an agreement on the aim to be achieved. Nutley et al. (2003) found that most evidence-based practice focussed on 'know-*what* works' as a form of explicit knowledge, however, for those involved in mainstreaming identifying what works

⁴⁰² Interview 1 (17-01-02)

⁴⁰³ Interview 11 (21-11-03)

⁴⁰⁴ Interview 20 (19-12-03)

was a very complex issue where the goal itself was contestable and where the actions required to achieve that goal were not clear.⁴⁰⁵

Conclusions

In the previous section, I identified 'know-how' as a surface level issue, and one that had emerged as a key concern in the previous chapter. Here I redefine it as a 'deep' level issue. The difference I want to draw attention to by making a distinction between 'surface' and 'deep' level questions is the difference between instrumental and theoretical understandings of causation. One of the key aspects of know-how was how to put mainstreaming into practice, and as discussed above, interviewees desired practical and concrete examples from which they would identify what to do. Specifically, abstract or theoretical discussion was seen as unhelpful. Yet, a lack of time for theorizing what the unit was doing was also identified, as were the poor opportunities for learning and feedback. While what policy makers wanted was a quick and easy guide, working out how to do mainstreaming will actually involve addressing these more theoretical issues.

As a result of these uncertainties, actors expressed a fear of 'getting it wrong' when working on mainstreaming. The belief that claims to know-*about* the causes and experiences of inequality lay with those with 'direct experience' of discrimination and inequality placed most policy makers, who, almost by definition, were seen as lacking in such experience, as 'unknowers':

if people are coming up with policies, they are to some extent operating from their own experience... and obviously a big concern for what is going to happen if the civil service is drawing up policies is that a lot of the people within the civil service, their entire working experience is within the civil service'. I mean even do you have, how would you have equality at that stage, prior to consultation?⁴⁰⁶

Thus, in contrast to the values underlying traditional ideas of the generalist civil servant, *who* makes policy was beginning to matter. On the other hand equality was seen as an issue which affected everyone, and thus it was not possible to identify a finite group(s) of the population who had such knowledge – we're all different.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ It is actually probably always a more complex issue than recognised.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview 2 (17-01-02)

⁴⁰⁷ It seems likely that this way of thinking about equality was influenced by ideas of diversity in the workplace which have stressed the way all individuals bring different talents.

Combined with concern over privileging one individual's or group's knowledge over another's, total knowledge was not possible: 'for some people there's a nagging doubt at the back of their mind of what if we've forgotten somebody, and how do we find out if we've forgotten somebody, until we get criticised,'⁴⁰⁸ yet without total knowledge and the basis for an easy relationship between knowledge and reality, policy makers worried that their interpretation of the (partial) information they did have was merely based on assumption. The only way to be sure you weren't making assumptions was to ask everybody, but this was obviously impossible, 'from my personal point of view there's always a fear that you're making assumptions, and you can't go around and ask everybody.'⁴⁰⁹ Interestingly, the exhortation to base policy in informed knowledge of people's lives increased rather than decreased anxiety about reliance on stereotypes: once the cover had been blown on the 'universal' subject, policy makers, aware of problems of representation and gatekeeping, were left with uncertainty as to exactly who policy should be based upon. There was always the possibility in the minds of civil servants that they had not done enough, that they had got it wrong. Interviewees were obviously uncomfortable with a growing awareness of knowledge as itself contestable, of there being multiple and competing claims to knowledge, though this understanding was bounded by the constraints of the bureaucratic frame. Thus while feminist knowledge may claim that equality requires a redistributive deal between women and men, in current political circumstances this was considered to be impossible as a justification of policy 'you just can't do that'.⁴¹⁰ The 'neutrality' of the civil service, combined with the need not to create trouble for the minister, worked to render feminist knowledge particular and often unacceptable. Greater knowledge complicates rather than simplifies the world in which actors operate: 'knowledge of the social world actually contributes to its instability, to conditions of uncertainty and ambivalence' (Sanderson, 2002, p. 7). Policy-making was far easier when underlying assumptions went unquestioned. 'The improved flow of knowledge and use of research can highlight the contested validity of knowledge(s)' (Stone, 2002, p. 291).

Mainstreaming is not only uncomfortable because it increases uncertainty; it also brings into question the principle of the generalist civil servant, which was still

⁴⁰⁸ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

⁴⁰⁹ Interview 15 (10-12-03)

⁴¹⁰ Interview 11 (21-22-03)

important to those interviewed, (especially those in 'mainstream' policy areas), even while the impossibility of some of its central tenets was recognised. '[A]s civil servants we're supposed to be impartial and objective and all of those kinds of things, now as social scientists we can, you know, think about those sort of statements and think, sociology 101, objectivity and impartiality are impossibilities for the following reasons. But at the same time you do have to try and take as much of a balanced view as possible.'⁴¹¹ While 'mainstream' civil servants were keen to see mainstreaming equality as the same as any other policy area, Equality Unit staff commented that it was unlike other policy issues in that it 'challenged people's beliefs and values', exposing the perceived neutrality and objectivity as partial. As noted above, doing mainstreaming as a civil servant would require managing dual positions. Some Civil Servants were well aware of the critiques of rationality, bureaucracy and objectivity, but could not reconcile these insights with the bureaucratic frame in which they operated.

Mainstreaming is about challenging traditional or conventional Civil Service ways of knowing through a gender or equality analysis whose theoretical foundations lie in feminism and feminist epistemology (Woodward, 2001, p. 14). It thus differs in important respects from the modernising government and evidence-based policy agendas in terms of which it has been framed. Experiential knowledge constitutes a direct challenge to traditional civil service knowledge in the way that feminist standpoint epistemologies challenged traditional scientific conceptions of knowledge. The principles of rationality, objectivity and impartiality are brought into question by a project which seeks to reorganise policy processes because 'in contrast to the standard assumption of policy making and policy-making organisations that their work is gender-neutral, it has been proven over and over again that gender differentials are not recognised in regular policies, and that unreflected assumptions include (most often unintentional) biases in favour of the existing unequal gender relations' (Verloo, 2001, p. 3).

The impact of mainstreaming has been to destabilising in a way which, at present, Civil Servants do not have a vocabulary to articulate. So far, this process of destabilisation has stopped short of the consolidation and exploration required to enable conflict to be identified and addressed. Instead, discomfort has been masked

⁴¹¹ Interview 11 (21-11-03)

through a continual process of reframing. The implications of this are explored in the conclusions.

Conclusions

As a case of policy diffusion equality mainstreaming is remarkable. It has been adopted on a global scale by national and regional governments, by transnational and international organisations. It has attracted intense interest from academics, activists and policy actors and has spawned seminar series, research, reports and the production of mainstreaming tools and techniques. This thesis has addressed the central paradox of gender and equality mainstreaming: namely that the remarkable diffusion of the strategy and its widespread adoption has been in stark contrast to the lack of evidence for any significant changes in working practices or the demonstration of concrete outcomes.

As we have elaborated, the opportunities afforded by constitutional change in the UK to embed new norms and values in institutional design have been well exploited. Feminists organised to ensure that the principle of equal opportunity was inextricably linked to the enhancement of democracy, and that a new Parliament would have a more equal balance of female and male representatives. We contend that accounts asserting that Scotland provided a positive environment for the development of mainstreaming have neglected the importance of the Civil Service as a force of continuity. The thesis has addressed this gap.

Based on understandings of the gendered nature of bureaucracy, and using the analytical tools of framing, a key aim of the thesis has been to provide insight into the possibilities of inserting gender into an organisation designed with 'man in mind' by exploring what it means to ask bureaucrats to work within a new frame. It locates this question in a study of the day-to-day interaction of policy makers directly involved in mainstreaming.

This thesis has demonstrated how framing has played an important role in the construction and reconstruction of the mainstreaming strategy in its journey from the transnational arena to the Scottish Executive, and again in its reconstruction within the Scottish Executive. It has taken forward the application of framing in the study of mainstreaming by reintroducing the concept as a fundamental process by which we shape and understand our world. Moving on from the study of framing as an instrumental activity, we have offered an analysis of implementation as beset by problems stemming from a conflict between feminist and bureaucratic

epistemological frames. A key finding of the thesis is how this frame conflict has been managed, or deferred, through a continual process of re-framing which is ultimately detrimental to policy implementation.

From Agenda-Setting to Implementation: frames in flux

Chapter one introduced the concept of mainstreaming, exploring its origins and development at the transnational level in order to set the scene for its adoption and development in Scotland. It developed the case for applying a frame analysis approach to the study of mainstreaming, suggesting that the ambiguity of the strategy had obscured conflict between the transformative aims of mainstreaming and the values of traditional bureaucracy. It was suggested that the refinement of the policy in implementation would expose this conflict.

In chapter two our understanding of framing was developed to bring back an emphasis on framing as shaping, organising and constructing how we 'know' about the world, in turn focussing attention on questions of frame conflict rather than the dominant interest in strategic and instrumental framing.

As chapters three and four have shown, the separate trajectories of state reconfiguration, and of relations between women and the state at the UK level and in Scotland created new and differentiated discursive contexts within which mainstreaming strategies have been developed. In Scotland this story has been one of the interaction of feminist activists and academics working strategically to engender the state using the opportunities provided by constitutional change to influence policy development and to imbue it with the principles of democratic renewal and participation. Their action has therefore both been prompted by, and in turn has informed, changes to the state.

Chapters three, four and five identified the greater potential for the development of a participatory-democratic framing of mainstreaming in Scotland, created by the widespread acceptance of the centrality of issues of women's representation to the project of creating a 'new politics' and through the influence of policy targeted reports. In chapter four the ease with which mainstreaming was adopted and the lack of significant debate regarding the strategy was explained by the strength of the 'common sense' frame regarding the place of gender representation in

devolution discourse, and by the extent to which mainstreaming remained an elite strategy. Taken up as the mechanism for ensuring an institutionalised voice for women within the devolved Scotland, mainstreaming appeared to solve the problem of communication between the Scottish state and women's organisations.

At the same time, chapter five demonstrates how the connections between feminists working within the administration, feminist academics and women and women's organisations within civic society had created opportunities for feminists to influence the development of mainstreaming policy. Tracing the influence of these interventions on the reframing of mainstreaming within the Executive's official exposition of the policy, contained in its publication the *Equality Strategy: working together for equality* the chapter identified the influence of both feminist and bureaucratic framings of mainstreaming.

While framed within the context of the democratic and participatory principles of the Consultative Steering Group, responsibility for mainstreaming was to lie with an institution that valued continuity rather than change. As an administration, the Civil Service in Scotland was committed to preserving the values and principles of the traditional generalist civil servant and to ensuring the continuity deemed necessary to aid smooth transition at devolution. As chapter six demonstrated, Executive staff continued to operate within the values and norms of the traditional Civil Service, even while the problematic nature of these was recognised.

Chapter six shifted the focus of analysis from the discursive construction of mainstreaming through documents, to its reconstruction in implementation. Through interviews with those involved, the chapter developed a thick description of the challenges which mainstreaming created, and of the strategies employed to contain them. By becoming adept at 'fitting in' with wider agendas and values, interviewees practised a continual strategy of reframing which allowed some movement forward, but which ultimately impeded implementation.

By reinterpreting the experiences of those implementing mainstreaming as manifestations of knowledge problems, chapter seven illuminated the destabilising effect of mainstreaming within the Civil Service. It provided a re-reading of the experience of implementation, suggesting that these processes of framing and reframing — used to ameliorate a mis-match between the needs of civil servants and the demands of mainstreaming — disguised a more fundamental issue: that the

frame conflict identified in chapter 6 was predicated upon different epistemological positions, or different ways of knowing.

Mainstreaming questioned the basis on which civil servants have traditionally made decisions and judgements about what they know and how they know it, and created new knowers in the form of individuals and groups holding experiential knowledge of the subjects civil servants addressed. Ultimately, mainstreaming brought into question the desirability and possibility of the generalist civil servant acting on the basis of impartiality, neutrality and objectivity.

Identifying the key response of 'fitting in' as a process of reframing, chapter seven demonstrated the extent to which the lack of a vocabulary for articulating the dissonance created by mainstreaming has necessitated the masking of frame conflict. Continual reframing perpetuated the ambiguity of the mainstreaming strategy and hence the anxiety over exactly what mainstreaming entailed and what actions it required. In response to the lack of any blueprint for action, actors emphasised the importance of flexibility, of readiness to take advantage of opportunity, and above all, of 'fitting in' with organisational agendas. Thus the consequence of reframing to avoid frame conflict was further reframing. The process of destabilisation has therefore stopped short of a radical rethinking of ways of working and of ways of knowing, for which a transformative version of mainstreaming aims.

An organisation in two minds⁴¹²

From the reinterpretation of the challenges of implementation as knowledge problems emerges a picture of the discomfort of an organisation (and individuals) committed to pursuing an agenda which challenged principles that it continued to hold central to its working culture. Mainstreaming is a 'meta-policy', it is a policy about policy making, and therefore raises questions about all the things which ordinarily, to act in the world as civil servants, members of the administration must take for granted. Outwardly, the Executive states that equality is to be placed at the heart of all it does, while in practice it is often still treated as a luxury. This conflict is evident within individuals, who believe, for example, that mainstreaming equality is common sense and important, but at the same time that other factors

⁴¹² The metaphor of 'being in two minds' was developed analysis of interviews.

(whose gendered, racialised nature is denied) are more important, or who, while recognising the impossibility of objectivity and impartiality, still see being objective and impartial as central to the performance of their jobs, or who, while recognising the complexity and messiness of the policy process, still cling to a rational ideal model of that process to enable them to act in it.

Paradoxically, mainstreaming also reinforced the status of rational knowledge even while, at another level, it undermined it. Framed as a way of doing evidence-based policy, and understood as a largely technical process, mainstreaming strengthened the idea that the better application of information could improve policy making in a purely technical and rational manner. Framed as part of modernising government and evidence-based policy agendas, and using the 'rational' tools of impact assessment, mainstreaming has been likened to a 'Trojan Horse' (Woodward, 2001, 2003) which will create transformations greater than those who implement it are aware (or would like), using 'bureaucratic tools to gain power over the definitions of women and men' (Woodward, 2003, p. 69).

In the run up to devolution, communication between policy makers and women activists in Scotland has been shown to be complicated by the different worlds that they inhabited. The lack of shared knowledge and understanding resulted in different perceptions of the same events, and in miscommunication. In the post-devolution context and the introduction of mainstreaming, this lack of shared knowledge and understanding has re-emerged as an issue within the Executive itself. As a result of living with the tensions produced by practising mainstreaming within bureaucracy, individuals within the Executive, and the organisation itself, are literally and metaphorically 'in two minds', attempting to combine two distinct epistemological positions. These two contrasting positions are embodied within the distinctions drawn between 'mainstream' and Equality Unit civil servants, between pragmatic generalists and specialist idealists.

Members of the Equality Unit were ascribed different values and concerns to those of their colleagues working in 'mainstream' areas. While the motivation for the latter was the will of Ministers, and the only relevant concerns were what needed to be done, and knowing how to do it, for the former, motivation strayed beyond immediate political direction to include questioning why action was important. Equality Unit staff could be concerned with the theory behind policy, their role

described in one instance as that of 'guardians of the theology' of mainstreaming.⁴¹³ To see mainstreaming as a religious theory, school of thought, or system of belief as the reference to theology implies, indicates some awareness of the extent to which it is based upon a different way of knowing from that normalised within the Executive.⁴¹⁴ The difficulties of understanding and communication between the two sets of actors can be usefully understood as arising from the presence of different and conflicting appreciative systems (Vickers, 1965).

At a discursive level, the distinction between the two types of civil servants was mapped neatly onto the bodies of Unit staff and 'mainstream' civil servants; yet these two groups were not in practice mutually exclusive, actual bodies blurred these boundaries. The practice of moving posts within the Executive raised the possibility for staff to move in and out of the Equality Unit and 'mainstream' areas (and this did happen). As noted above, individual actors maintained a commitment to both the principles and values of traditional bureaucracy, and to the principles and values of mainstreaming, even where these were in conflict. Discussing the relationship between culture and appreciative systems, Vickers (1965, p. 19) defines culture as including '*any* shared 'appreciative system' to the extent that it is shared' and goes on to note the possibility of belonging equally to more than one shared culture (e.g. as a scientist and a member of a nation). Equality Unit staff, similarly belonged both to a shared culture within the Unit, and to the shared culture of the Executive, though this dual citizenship was differentially and problematically experienced.⁴¹⁵

Within the Scottish Executive, there were those who understood, and supported, mainstreaming's transformative aims, yet the dominance of a discourse of bureaucratic rationality and neutrality made it difficult if not impossible to frame mainstreaming in this way from their position as civil servants.⁴¹⁶ These individuals can be seen to have struck a bargain between being able to inform the development of the strategy from the inside, and their ability to be critical of its framing in integrationist terms. This hidden agenda of transformation is in fact at odds with

⁴¹³ Interview 4 (05-02-02)

⁴¹⁴ Though feminist and religious epistemologies are not necessarily complementary.

⁴¹⁵ Though it is an interesting question whether the idea of a shared culture within the Unit is one that is externally created, an imposition of homogenous culture on a perceived other, rather than self-identified.

⁴¹⁶ Though in interview with me, some individuals openly supported mainstreaming as transformation, it was invariably 'sold' to other civil servants as an integrationist strategy.

the organisational understandings it is framed within, creating an epistemological confusion within the organisations in which it is implemented. Frame conflict is managed and obscured by processes of framing and reframing, which alternatively can be understood as working responses to knowledge questions.

The findings of this thesis call for a far less instrumental application of the concept of framing, one that recognises that inquiry needs to go beyond analysis of the success of framing strategies to get an issue adopted, to consider the implications of possible unresolved tensions within the newly proffered, and often instrumental frame. Identifying this 'deeper level' at which frame conflict operates, gives rise to the question of possibilities for conflict resolution. The continual processes of reframing identified in chapter six are seen to weaken the potential for 'frame reflective discourse' (Schön and Rein, 1994) to offer a way out of conflict. Following Morth (2000), reframing is seen as managing rather than resolving frame conflict. Ironically, implementation is constrained by the management of frame conflict. At the same time, the very search for conflict resolution is questioned by the radical potential of mainstreaming to unsettle the organisation of knowledge.

Dissonance and doubt

The state of being in two minds, and of holding conflicting allegiances, manifested itself in expressions of discomfort and unease. Reframing managed to hold overt frame conflict at bay, but at the expense of continuing ambiguity. In Chapter five it was suggested that the *Equality Strategy*, as the official and authoritative text on mainstreaming within the Executive, offered a potential means of reducing ambiguity. It was suggested that it might perform as the source of collective memory making within the Executive, providing the organisation with an authoritative definition of mainstreaming, identified with the Executive rather than any other organisation and able to over-ride individuals' recollections and intentions. Indeed, interviewees referred to the *Equality Strategy* as the basis of a shared understanding of mainstreaming within the Executive. Yet the experience of those working directly with mainstreaming questioned the extent to which this definition created a single and shared meaning. If deconstructed, the shared understanding of mainstreaming collapsed, since the components of that definition, for example, what it meant to 'integrate an equalities perspective', were either not known or varied between (and even within) individuals.

To expect the *Strategy* to perform such a function is perhaps naïve, attributing to documents an ability to fix meaning that they do not possess. Brown and Duguid (1996) have argued that documents provide a shared context (and community) for constructing meaning, rather than a shared meaning; they are the beginning rather than the end of the process of negotiation. The Equality Strategy created a community in which the negotiation (and renegotiation) of meaning was conducted, rather than fixing that meaning within the Executive.

The anxiety prompted by mainstreaming can be likened to Pierce's (1877) 'irritation of doubt' that plagues those who cannot achieve a state of belief. For Pierce, it is the irritation of doubt that motivates the practice of inquiry; we strive 'to free ourselves' from this 'uneasy and dissatisfied state'. The anxiety spawned by mainstreaming also motivated inquiry, as demonstrated by the repeated attempts to figure out what needed to be done, what was required, how to do it. Yet inquiry led not to belief, but rather, as argued above, to the continuation of ambiguity, and this ambiguity served a function: the containment or management of inconsistency resulting from the conflicting epistemological frames of feminism and bureaucracy.

The need to manage inconsistency within institutionalised organisation is not a new observation. Meyer and Rowan (1991) describe a process of 'decoupling' the formal rules of organisation from actual work activities, necessary because, if applied, the formal rules of the organisation would generate inconsistencies. Yet organisations cannot dispense with formal rules as these provide necessary standardisation and legitimacy. Unable to operationalise formal rules, organisations become dependent on the quality of 'human relations'; 'individuals are left to work out technical interdependencies informally. The ability to coordinate things in violation of the rules – that is, to get along with other people – is highly valued' (1991, p. 58). In chapter five, the experience of Equality Unit staff highlighted the importance of informal networks and good contacts in pursuing mainstreaming work – getting along with other people was identified as a key response to the difficulties of working in a complex system whose realities did not match formal structures. Decoupling then formed part of a strategy of coping with inconsistency arising from frame conflict. It also increased the strain on individual actors, compounded by lack of institutional power, high workloads and competing priorities. Decoupling formal rules from actual practice facilitated the reframing of mainstreaming to fit changing agendas.

In her observations of frame conflict between market and defence frames within the European Commission, Morth (2000, p. 185) finds that 'by *reframing* the defence equipment and industry issue the Commission manages the conflict between the market and defence frames. Thus, frame competition will persist but in a less obvious way.' The ability to maintain a level of ambiguity can enable some common understanding of how to proceed in the policy-making process, but maintains a 'basic lack of clarity concerning how these two frames could be reconciled with each other' (2000, p. 186). The more successful such reframing strategies are, the less are the opportunities for frame reflection.

By maintaining a level of ambiguity, continual reframing of mainstreaming to fit with changing agendas guards against the implicit frame conflict between mainstreaming and organisational cultures, between feminist and bureaucratic ways of knowing, becoming explicit. Reframing is both facilitative and constraining; it facilitates action but defers, rather than resolves, conflict. There is inconsistency between the 'formal theory' of mainstreaming as compatible with the norms of a generalist civil service and the 'theory in use' (Agyris and Schön, 1992) which provides examples of incompatibility. Yet reframing denies a language to speak about such incompatibility, and thus constrains possibilities for reflection and learning.

Possibilities for frame restructuring

The thesis has argued that a distinction should be drawn between instrumental and sense-making framings. While the former may be vital in securing the adoption of new agendas by framing them so that they resonate with the extant frames of the adopting organisation, they do not fundamentally succeed in restructuring those frames so that their elements are no longer in conflict. Rein and Schön (1993) and Schön and Rein (1994) have argued that the means for achieving such restructuring lie in empirical epistemology — the 'inquiry into the knowing-in-practice by which, in our society, we deal with policy controversies in the absence of an agreed-upon basis for resolving them (Rein and Schön, 1993, p. 145).

For Rein and Schön there is an important distinction between disagreement within a common frame which is resolvable, and conflict between frames which is not. Conflict between frames is irresolvable due to the lack of a shared understanding or 'appreciative system' (Vickers, 1965) in instances of frame conflict. Unwilling to

accept the 'spectre of epistemological relativism' which stems from the impossibility of judging between conflicting frames, they propose frame reflective discourse as 'a policy discourse in which participants would reflect on the frame conflicts implicit in their controversies and explore the potentials for their resolution.' (1993, p. 150). Frame reflective discourse is advocated as a means for policy analysts to uncover the multiple, conflicting frames that exist in a policy area and, through conversation with their situation, to achieve a frame-shift which opens the possibility for resolution of frame conflict. This is done through a process of inquiry into:

- the sources of conflicting frames;
- the histories, roles, institutional contexts and interests of participants;
- and the ambiguities and inconsistencies contained in conflicting frames and consequences to which their use may lead.

The responses of actors to the challenges of mainstreaming, identified as the exploitation of informal networks, the development of an opportunistic and flexible approach, and the ability to 'fit in' with wider agendas, which enabled actors to function and make some advances in mainstreaming, were also seen to hamper opportunities for learning and feedback. Combined with workload and time pressures (generic to the Executive), opportunities for reflection were severely constrained. These conditions create practical barriers to practising frame reflective discourse within the Executive. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, these practical barriers were reinforced by conceptual barriers resulting from the masking of frame conflict in the first place.

The possibilities for frame resolution within the Scottish Executive are diminished by the immediate reframing strategies employed by actors which paper over the tensions arising from frame conflict. When mainstreaming hits an obstacle, the recurring question has been 'what does it mean' and 'what do we need to do'. By raising these questions, actors are able to build new consensus for mainstreaming work, to renegotiate with old and to involve new actors, but at the same time, they preclude reflection on the elements defined as necessary for frame resolution, namely: the sources of conflicting frames; the histories, roles, institutional contexts and interests of participants; and the ambiguities and inconsistencies contained in conflicting frames and consequences to which their use may lead.

Restructuring or rethinking

It has been argued that managing conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames through processes of reframing has constrained the development of mainstreaming within the Scottish Executive. Specifically, this process has stopped short of the consolidation necessary for unlearning to lead to rethinking. In order for this to happen, actors need to develop a language that enables them to express not just the practical and technical concerns that mainstreaming raises, but to understand and express these as arising from conflicting epistemological bases. The development of such language and the consequent practice of inquiry must necessarily be an iterative and continual process; any apparent solutions are likely to mask further questions. By enabling the policy actor to 'see' policies and problematisations in new ways, tools such as disaggregated data or gender impact assessments, while apparently conforming to the formal rules of the organisation may provide the impetus for the unlearning and rethinking required (Woodward, 1999, 2001, 2003).

The resolution of conflict between bureaucratic and feminist frames would require not a compromise between the two frames, nor the fusing of their elements, nor the disguising of conflict, but the fundamental restructuring of the frames at a sense-making level such that their elements are no longer contradictory. If this were to be achieved, then mainstreaming would have reached its goal; it would have engendered bureaucracy.

Yet a problem remains. I argue that while the restructuring envisaged is more than compromise, the resulting consensus has a static quality which is in tension with the transformative potential of mainstreaming to continuously raise difficult questions. Fundamental to the 'reorganising' of policy processes required by mainstreaming is an unsettling of taken for granted behaviours and assumptions, which need to be continually questioned in order that a gender perspective be integrated. Equality is fundamentally upsetting for bureaucracy and demands continual critical thinking.

The rethinking demanded by mainstreaming is more than a requirement to come up with new ideas; it captures the potential identified by Hughes and Kerfoot (2002, p. 473) for a 'bolder, more impudent spirit ... [t]o rethink requires imagination and wisdom. Rethinking, in this way, requires a degree of 'unlearning' as we reflect upon or try to put aside conventional ways of knowing'. Not only is this process unsettling but 'undoing and unsettling the organisation of our knowledge' (p. 473) is the very aim of such rethinking. Mainstreaming then, should seek not for a

resolution of the conflict between feminist and bureaucratic epistemologies, but rather to use this conflict to continually unsettle the knowledge of bureaucratic organisation.

To institutionalise a fundamentally disruptive practice will require new thinking about institutionalisation. The aim of mainstreaming is to institutionalise an equalities perspective, yet our understanding of institutionalisation is one of taken for granted behaviour and routinized behaviour, the exact opposite of mobilisation (Inhetveen, 1999). This understanding of what it means for a practice to become an institution is common not only to definitions of mainstreaming found in key documents, but also to the understanding of those working on mainstreaming within the Executive. The goal is for mainstreaming to become second nature, to be something that can be done as a matter of nature, without thought, yet the very aim of mainstreaming is to be unsettling, to raise more questions, and to demand not just thinking and learning, but rethinking and unlearning. Mainstreaming therefore demands the institutionalisation of processes antithetical to institutionalisation.

The identification of the underlying epistemological conflict between feminist and bureaucratic frames takes us beyond a simplistic understanding of patriarchal resistance as an explanatory factor for the lack of further progress in mainstreaming. It demonstrates that mainstreaming is fundamentally challenging to civil service ways of working and knowing, it goes to the heart of the way people do things. In so doing it furthers our understanding of the fundamental paradox presented by mainstreaming identified above.

The thesis contends that the current dominant emphasis in feminist policy analysis on framing as strategic action is limited with respect to the insights it offers into the complex processes of implementation. Instead it is argued that there is a need to return to earlier constructions of framing as shaping, organising and constructing how we 'know' about the world. This 'frame' of framing takes forward our understandings of the institutional dynamics that frustrate the implementation of transformatory feminist policy. As a policy study of mainstreaming, the thesis, in turn, contributes to the wider policy literature through its analysis of the dynamics of, and problems presented by, processes of implementation.

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